

Electoral Boundaries Commission

If you think this is out of line, Mr. Chairman, let me refer you to our own blue book of estimates for the last fiscal year, 1963-64. According to page 362 the royal commission on banking and finance cost this country \$199,300. The commission on health services cost \$275,500; another commission on pilotage cost \$301,220. If you add these figures and take the average you will find it is approximately \$258,000. With the setting up of 10 commissions costing \$690,000, less, say \$258,000 for one central commission, it would cost roughly \$432,000 more than if we had one central commission. I venture to say that before all these commissions finish their work it will cost the country half a million dollars more to have ten commissions than if we had one central commission. I bring this to the attention of the committee because no one has mentioned the cost of ten commissions as opposed to one and it is a point that should be given serious consideration.

There are many other things I might say about the bill but they have been discussed very well. I do not think we should be in too much hurry with this legislation. We must be sure that we do a good job because it will be another ten years before it is revised. With a population of 19 to 20 million people Canada is overgoverned now. If you ask the average Canadian citizen he will tell you we are overgoverned. Personally I hope that when this redistribution is finished we will have no more than 265 members in the house. I think the average Canadian citizen would like to see fewer members rather than more.

I commend the minister for bringing this legislation before the house. As I said at the start, we believe in the non-partisan approach and a judicial tribunal with rules for its guidance. We agree that parliament should have the final say. I hope that before the bill passes, the committee amendments will be made in respect of the tolerance figure because the fact is that rural ridings, because of their very nature, should not be required to have the same population as urban constituencies. I have expressed my views why there should be one independent national commission. One commission can do just as thorough a job as the very costly and expensive set-up of ten commissions throughout the country. Having in mind the few amendments that I hope will be made to the bill, I am sure we will enact legislation that we will be proud of and that future generations will thank us for it.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): Mr. Chairman, one problem which I find rather disturbing was presented to the committee very ably this afternoon by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. I refer to the matter of unequal

[Mr. Hales.]

representation as between similar areas of the nation. I do not think anyone can quarrel with the minister's statement that Manitoba and Saskatchewan, having equal population, should also have equal representation. However, I was intrigued by the comparisons made by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre in which he showed that the combined population of Manitoba and Saskatchewan is almost equal to that of the Atlantic provinces. It seems to me that in all fairness an amendment should be made to section 51 of the British North America Act establishing a formula whereby the provinces losing seats would be protected to the extent that no serious discrepancies would be allowed to exist between areas as far as representation is concerned.

As I have said, no one can seriously quarrel with the fact that Manitoba and Saskatchewan should have equal representation, but as these two provinces encompass a large part of central Canada it is reasonable to assume that in regard to representation a comparison with the Atlantic provinces could be made. As mentioned by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, redistribution would leave Manitoba and Saskatchewan with 26 seats compared with 31 for the Atlantic provinces, although the populations of the two areas are almost equal. Under these circumstances I think the government should give consideration to amending section 51 of the British North America Act to give Manitoba and Saskatchewan an electoral floor of 14 seats each. The elected representatives of the people for that area would have a far better opportunity to keep in close touch with their constituents than would be possible with an enlargement of the constituencies to any great extent. With any further enlargement it would be almost physically impossible to provide proper representation.

Aside from the question of the vastness of the constituencies I am particularly disturbed about the representations concerning the constituency of Churchill, a riding which takes in two thirds of the province of Manitoba and yet would fall far short of a quota. Any enlargement of that area would simply make it physically impossible for the member to do the job he is expected to do as the elected representative. There is also the factor of rivers and the lack of access roads which constitutes a real problem. I hope these matters will be taken into consideration by the commission when it is doing its work.

Every province, of course, will face the possibility of losing some of its historic ridings in the shuffle. This is not only to be regretted but, if possible, it should be avoided. I am not going to mention particular ridings but there are