

*Redistribution*

argument which in my opinion should result in a complete revision of the decisions made by the Alberta commission.

I might just mention in passing, Mr. Speaker, that in the debate setting up the electoral commissions I stated my opinion that it would be more satisfactory if these men could be appointed on a non-political, non-partisan basis. However, as I have studied the results of the Alberta commission's deliberations, as well as those in some of the other provinces, I have come to the conclusion that I was mistaken in this opinion. I believe that no group of political representatives could have committed the errors which have been made in so many of the instances we have before us.

● (5:00 p.m.)

In this regard I was quite impressed by an argument advanced by Senator Jean François Pouliot, which is recorded in the Senate Debates for February 23. Surely Senators should not be too concerned, from the point of view of their own personal welfare, about constituencies and the readjustment of boundaries, so I think this veteran parliamentarian must have been speaking from conviction and without prejudice. He had this to say:

I would also add that in my view it is a very serious mistake for the House of Commons to abdicate its rights, and for the members of that house not to decide what in fact is their own business, the establishment of county boundaries. I am sure that the representatives of all political parties and groups in that house could come to some arrangement. It has been done for nearly a century, and I feel it should still be possible for them to come to a compromise regarding the establishment of these boundaries.

I believe those are words of wisdom, Mr. Speaker. What is happening now in this debate is evidence that it is possible for those who are directly concerned as members of parliament in the area of politics to come to an agreement which would be to the best advantage of all concerned as we are trying to reach a more equitable distribution of electoral seats in light of population trends.

I suggest there are several basic principles which should be followed in any adjustment of electoral districts. I know these points are not new and have been made before in this debate but I wish to re-emphasize them. First of all, it is imperative that natural boundaries be considered. In many instances natural boundaries are barriers to travel and communication. I would also mention in this regard that I believe that before too long we are going to be faced with having to accept a

permanent voters list. When these permanent voters lists are established it would be to the advantage of municipal, provincial and federal government electoral boundaries if they were made conterminous at every possible point. There is no better point where conterminous boundaries can be established than along natural barriers.

I also believe there are natural lines of communication both commercial and social, which must be considered. Certainly population trends are very important. In the allowable quota on either side of the norm which has been fixed it is only reasonable to say that the more rapidly growing areas, such as the urban areas, must be considered so far as future developments are concerned. Otherwise in a very few years we would have a repetition of the situation which now exists in many cases. In this regard I refer to the cities of Calgary and Edmonton.

Perhaps the most important principle of all states that it is essential in a representative democracy that the constituents living within an electoral district have access to their member of parliament and that likewise their member of parliament have access to his constituents. It is only as we can keep that communication open and as free as possible that we can have the desired result in parliament.

In the case of Alberta I believe the commission did not take into consideration these basic points as they should have. Otherwise we would not have the situation we have at the present time which I think is entirely impractical and certainly not desirable.

The whole problem in Alberta has been created because of this new, impractical monstrosity called the constituency of Rocky Mountain. This constituency begins at its southern boundary at the United States border, moves through Waterton national park, through the Crowsnest area up to Banff national park and on through Jasper national park. Then, because they could not find enough people even to come within the desired norm, the commissioners had to move farther north till they came within three townships of the town of Grande Prairie, some 700 miles from the U.S. border. They had to move eastward to take in a town like Whitecourt. As a result we now have an absolutely impossible constituency contrary to every one of these principles I have mentioned.

It is my opinion, and I think my opinion coincides with the opinion of all members of