

• (4:00 p.m.)

He said: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we had the usual Friday afternoon attendance in the House which is so somewhat like the summer congregation in church where the people present are the converted.

All hon. members who have studied this bill will be struck by its reasonableness and logic. This is the third time since 1968 that I have presented the bill. It has been debated on previous occasions, once when it was a notice of motion and again 18 or 20 months ago when it was a bill in the present form. I have come back to the charge because time is getting short with regard to any effective change to the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. A decennial census was held last June and preliminary figures on population should be available in May or June of 1974. Upon presentation of those figures the representation commissioner must begin acting on what was then known as Bill C-72 of 1964 and which appeared as chapter 31 in the Revised Statutes of 1964. What its appellation is in the Revised Statutes of 1970 I could not say, and it is quite immaterial.

Mr. Blair: To me, too.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): "To me too," says the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Blair) and I rather expect he has read the bill. I should like to review what has happened and why I present this rather minor amendment. The representation commissioner will set up the electoral boundaries commission which will examine the situation in each province relative to each riding. It is directed to hold public hearings and to make a report. Under section 12 of the act the commission shall—

—prepare a report setting forth its recommendations concerning the division of that province into electoral districts and its recommendations concerning the description of the boundaries of each such district and the representation and name to be given thereto.

Section 13 of the act outlines the factors that each commission shall consider in determining the size of a constituency, its boundaries and in particular the quantum of derivation from the norm. As hon. members know, there is a tolerance of 25 per cent up or down from the quotient or the provincial norm. There are few members present in the House, but most on this side who attended the hearings of the provincial commissions in 1964 will remember that in many instances their recommendations were completely ignored. Many of the re-fashionings of the electoral map of this country were not carried out by the commissions but were the product of some group in Ottawa that played with maps and figures from the census figures. They seemed to have the most abysmal ignorance of any constituencies except those in the city of Ottawa where they might have been able to examine the lay-out.

I do not know where the commission for the province of Ontario started, but the residual portion must have been in southeastern Ontario. Without pointing the finger at any particular seats, my heart goes out to some members on the other side of this chamber who were left with what could be considered a fashioned abortion of districts—not as to the people but as to the disparate nature of the constituencies. Any relationship to the factors outlined in section 13(c) of the act were apparently totally ignored. I

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recall that in my province the chairman of the commission insisted that actual figures, totals, were the primary rule; in other words, as close an adherence as possible to the rule of one man, one vote. As to the other factors, they might be considered if they had an incidental application. There was, naturally, some elasticity in numbers.

In talking to members and noting the size of the objections ruled on by Mr. Speaker pursuant to section 20 of the act, one can readily understand that on the whole the job did not meet with the approval of Members of Parliament. This bill somehow had its origin in ideas of super-political purity. I do not know whether the idea that anything that a Member of Parliament touches must be tainted is prevalent in academic circles, or whether it is something buried in the dust of editorial offices. In my considerable experience as a Member of Parliament and the actual servicing of a constituency where one is dealing with the community which is, frankly, the political family related to a Member of Parliament, I can say unhesitatingly that no man understands how a constituency is put together as a workable representational unit better than the Member of Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): There may be exceptions, but the man who has worked his constituency and attended to it knows its inner details. I live in Ottawa and occasionally I have been reproached by individuals who ask what I know about Edmonton and what goes on in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, I would wager that I know more about what goes on in that constituency and its perimeter than anyone who is bound by his particular neighbourhood and his own particular interests. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we all pay attention to details in respect of the whole area. We know the mix of the people; we know what interests they have.

• (4:10 p.m.)

My constituents are very fine people. Mine is an urban constituency, yet it covers two areas of the city of Edmonton, the western side on the north of the river and the far north-eastern side—and never the twain shall meet so far as having a community of interest is concerned. I do not say that everybody should be of the same income group in a community; I just point out that there is that particular mix.

I want, through my amendment, to make certain that when fashioning its report a commission gives reasons for its decision. I put it to hon. gentlemen that there is nothing worse than coming into this House and debating a report on the basis of objections when no reasons have been given for changes which have been made. In other words, under this act the representation commissions are simply given *carte-blanche* within certain perimeters to make the changes they wish. They can change the name of an hon. member's constituency and they do not have to say why; they can just sit back and the burden is entirely upon the one who objects.

It seems to me, now that we have adopted this system of a representation commissioner and the setting up of electoral boundaries under a so-called independent system—and it is not independent of certain prejudices, let me assure the House—that if changes are to be made in any