

Redistribution

such a way that the people have a geographical entity, whereby they can best be represented.

It does not matter if one riding has 51,000 people and another has 56,000 people if the boundaries of the riding are such that within that riding the people are living in a unit in which they are accustomed to operating in other fields of their endeavour, and if they maintain their traditions and history, and if the riding is that kind of unit which encourages them to participate in politics and take their proper place within the political system. Surely it is far better to have some numerical discrepancies and have that kind of a riding than to have perfect numerical equality by shoving everyone into ridings where they have no connection or association, and where they will not take part in the political affairs of their country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker, I should now like to add a word or two on behalf of the Polish community which is centred in Wilno, which is located in the area to which I have referred.

This community has existed for over 100 years. There are several generations of Polish people living there who have played a very great part in the history of the development of Renfrew county. These people have been among the foremost citizens who took part in the last great conflict. I am not personally familiar with world war I, although I may look that old, but certainly during the second world war—

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Just wait until you have been a minister a couple more years.

Mr. Greene: In another couple of years I will be back to the Boer war.

Certainly no people played a more worthy and glorious part in serving their country during the second world war than did the Polish people of Renfrew county. I have no specific statistics but I would venture to say there is no segment of the Canadian population that had a greater percentage of men enlist voluntarily in the armed forces than did that Polish community of South Renfrew.

These people came to that part of Canada, even though there might have been land available that was more arable, because it reminded them very much of the part of Poland from which they had emigrated. They

have played a very great part in the historical development of Renfrew county, and they are proud to be a part of that area. Renfrew county means a very great deal to them. All their associations have been within the county of Renfrew for many years. These are Roman Catholic people, and the diocese of Pembroke is the diocese in which they find themselves, for the purpose of religious organization. The bishop of the diocese lives in Pembroke. They are deeply religious people and they look to Pembroke as the centre of their religious organization.

As I said earlier, for every purpose—social, economic and religious—they are a part of Renfrew county and a very proud part. They have always taken a very keen interest in the political affairs of this country. These people came here because of the inadequacies of the political affairs in their own land, and they have not forgotten that it is important to take part in political affairs in order to preserve those rights which they cherish and deem paramount.

These Polish people have been accustomed to doing everything they do in associations of various kinds, since the time they came to this country, in the county of Renfrew. What we are doing now by this commission proposal is chopping them in half, placing part of them in one riding and part in another, showing scorn and contempt for their history and tradition. They care not how much it has meant to them to have been part of Renfrew county for all purposes—social, religious, economic and political—from the time they came to Canada.

I believe their history is extremely important. We have too little history in this country and this is a time when we must have more concern and pride for our past. I think we are doing a great disservice not only to these Polish people, but to the needs of the country, in showing this complete disregard for their past, and by putting them into these new ridings, irrespective of what they might want.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I would urge the commission, now that they have the opportunity and the time, to take a second look at this matter. We have all made mistakes in the past, and it may well be that the commission felt there was the pressure of time upon them—they were in a hurry; there was an election coming and they had to get this job done. Perhaps that is why they did the job in such a haphazard fashion.