

Electoral Boundaries Commissions

I will quote the Northwest Territories, which cover an area of some 1,342,000 square miles. The sitting member is expected to serve this vast region on the basis of exactly the same expense account as is available to, let us say, the hon. member for Carleton or the hon. member for Ottawa East, which is patently ridiculous.

I suppose that in the absence of government legislation this is a matter which no private member could seek to remedy; it would be called a money bill. Therefore, while we are talking about redistribution, I think the present is an appropriate time at which to bring the subject forward. I do not suggest we should cut down the size of the enormous riding to which I have referred, but I think we should certainly take a realistic view of the situation and make sure that no undue financial strain is placed on a private member because he seeks to do a job for his people, which cannot be done unless some change is made in the provision allotted to him.

It may be of interest to the house to know that the most easterly point in the Northwest Territories Cape Dyer on Baffin island, a point which is east of Halifax. This constituency runs west to a point west of Queen Charlotte islands off the coast of British Columbia and to Aklavik in the far northwest corner. And we, as representatives of the people, try to pretend that a man can cover this immense territory with the same ease as those who represent, say, Ottawa East and Carleton county.

I know all members of the house recall the contribution which was made by the former member for the Northwest Territories. There is no one here who does not know what a strain this imposed on him, both physically and financially. We cannot undo the harm we did to this man, but we can certainly make sure it does not happen to another. The least we can do is to be realistic and make sure that some consideration is given to placing public transportation at the disposal of members who represent these vast outlying districts.

I represent one of these large districts myself. I am not complaining particularly about that, but even in my district it is very hard to get around an area of some 65,000 square miles. So I have great sympathy with those who have to cover a territory such as the Yukon, for example, on exactly the same basis as is made available to other members, and I think it is time we did something about it. If I am out of order in dis-

cussing the subject, Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to enlarge on my remarks on some other occasion, but since this is a question of some urgency I hope my words will not go unheeded at this time.

Mr. J. E. Pascoe (Moose Jaw-Lake Centre): I am glad the hon. member for Middlesex West has put his views on record calling for special consideration to be given to particular areas affected by this redistribution measure. I too wish to make a few remarks on Bill No. C-72 before the house completes its consideration on third reading. I wish to protest very strongly, as I did on Friday night, against the threatened loss of four seats in Saskatchewan. I do not think any province should suffer such a loss in its representation as four seats in the course of one redistribution.

I draw to the attention of the house what happened during the redistribution of 1952. At that time the Liberal government of the day took action to see that the reduction of seats in Saskatchewan was minimized. Of course at that time there were Liberal representatives from Saskatchewan in the house, and this probably had some effect on the thinking of the government of the day. I drew attention on Friday to the statement of policy just released by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, that factors other than population should be used in determining equitable representation. What I am suggesting is that action should be taken to see that the west has equitable representation in this house in accordance with its position in the country's economy. I believe, too, that discussions of changes in our country's constitution will be coming up very shortly, and I understand some effort will be made at that time to consult with the provinces in connection with the representation which each province should have.

I do not intend to repeat what I said on Friday, but I wish to point out once more, as forcefully as I can, that the action taken in clause 13 in providing special consideration for certain constituencies should also apply to provinces as a whole. I think the commissions should be instructed by this house to consider the situation in Saskatchewan very carefully. I also believe special consideration should be given to the prairie provinces as a whole so their representation may be kept in fair balance with that of Ontario and Quebec.

As I said on Friday night, I do not wish to become too political. Nevertheless, I believe I should put the situation very clearly once