

Electoral Boundaries Commission

north country areas like Saguenay, Port Arthur, etc., which can't be helped by redistribution anyway.

I assure the reader that I have not invented any of these arguments for making urban ridings more populous than rural ones. I have found them all in the writings of distinguished students of the subject; and, on balance, I think very little of them indeed.

I tend to find very little in them, indeed, myself. I believe that the overriding principle in representation should be representation by population. I should like to point to the example of Saskatchewan. I say this despite the criticism suggested by the Prime Minister last night. I think the province of Saskatchewan is the most fairly proportioned of all the provinces at the present time in terms of the median of population and some kind of median in terms of the size of the constituency. I know that both Saskatoon and Regina are out of line, and I feel they should be reduced in population terms by adding either to the adjoining constituencies or by creating other constituencies. It seems to me that in Saskatchewan, and to a lesser degree in Manitoba, we come closer to representation by population than in any of the other provinces. It seems to me that this is the goal we should really put forward as the first, overriding principle, to our electoral boundary commission.

The last thing I really wanted to touch upon stemming from the Prime Minister's remarks was his suggestion that county lines, and I would assume municipal lines, are to be considered to a certain extent by the electoral commission. This is a traditional argument, for example, that has held sway for a very long time in the province of Quebec and to a degree in rural Ontario. The argument is that it would be wrong to break up these traditional ridings and constituencies. People worry a great deal about traditional boundaries of municipalities and townships and, as the Prime Minister indicated, they even worry about the courses taken by rivers.

However, as I look at the situation faced by the hon. member for Mackenzie, the hon. member for Yukon, the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador and myself, I cannot help laughing at this. The hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador has a part of Newfoundland and a chunk of Labrador in his electoral area. I received word in a sessional paper yesterday that I have some 1,400 Indians in my constituency at a place called Trout lake, which I have never seen. To get there I would have to go 200 miles to Sioux Lookout, and there charter an airplane to make another flight of 280 miles in order to locate them. Is it any wonder that when I look at problems like

[Mr. Fisher.]

those which hon. members for these big Ontario ridings face, I cannot help but chuckle ironically at the fuss made over old lines in the redistribution of urban constituencies, particularly in Ontario and Quebec.

I see that the hon. member for York-Scarborough is giving me an unsolicited accompaniment—

Mr. McGee: A crying towel.

Mr. Fisher: I hope he will take the opportunity to participate in this debate. The hon. member has said something about a crying towel. In that connection I would point out that in my area the Progressive Conservative candidate and the president of the Liberal association have met with me and we have looked at this particular problem as it affects the constituency. We have come to a firm agreement that when the commission is set up we will make a joint submission to it and point out the difficulties that face a constituency such as ours. It is quite apparent that we cannot get the best kind of thorough representation when we are faced with a problem of so much population scattered over so very wide an area.

The story contained in the population figures given by the census of Canada is a fairly easy one to write. Indeed, it seems to me that most of the gentlemen in the press gallery have had no trouble in pointing out the inequality between Iles-de-la-Madeleine and Mercier, where in one case the population is above 200,000 while in the case of Iles-de-la-Madeleine it only takes 12,000 voters to elect a member of parliament. However it is foolish under the present situation to compare Iles-de-la-Madeleine with York-Scarborough. What we have to do is compare, within the provincial framework, York-Scarborough with Grey-Bruce and Dufferin-Simcoe and ask ourselves why during the last five or six years the hon. member for Grey-Bruce has been worth approximately six times in basic voting terms what the hon. member for York-Scarborough is worth.

It is quite apparent that you cannot work out the division even to 1,000 or 2,000, but it does seem to me that we need a formula or approach that will allow for a leeway of a ratio of seven to five between constituencies. I notice some people are enthusiastic about the ratio arrived at in Manitoba, but I cannot see why the Manitoba ratio should be applicable to the rest of Canada, because Manitoba has a rather unique urban-rural situation. Winnipeg has relatively so much larger a population, taken in comparison with other parts of the province which have mostly a farming population.

The principle that I believe should be put to the electoral commission is that they seek not