

Redistribution Commission

Speaker of the house, as well as for the distinguished members of the press, to easily identify hon. members. I have in mind, for instance, the ridings of Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands, Berthier-Maskinonge-Delanau-diere, Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm—

Mr. Pigeon: It is a very good name.

Mr. Chretien: —Chateauguay-Huntingdon-Laprairie, etc. In my opinion, the terms of reference we will give this commission should include power to change names and impose certain restrictions concerning the names of new ridings, because it is much easier to remember names like Hull, Longueuil, etc.

In my opinion, the commission should find names easier to memorize, and this would make the business of the house more efficient.

I therefore suggest that in addition to these terms of reference, the commission be asked to give short and simple names to the constituencies after having drawn their boundary lines, in order to simplify the business of the house and the work of the members of the press gallery.

[Text]

Mr. Fisher: I have had so many opportunities in the last few parliaments to speak on this subject that I have no intention of entering upon any general review now. I wish to concentrate on one element only of the redistribution problem, mostly to the exclusion of the others. This is the problem which arises in relation to area as well as to population. It is one which leads me to want to put on record some statistics.

It would be foolish to suggest amendments to an act which one has not seen, but I think it might be possible for us to consider some adjustments or amendments to any formula, such as a 20 per cent formula, so as to allow for those ridings which have huge areas and a scattered population. I think I can best make my point by putting on record the largest constituencies in area in Canada, giving their population according to the 1956 figures. We have a total of 37 constituencies in Canada which have an area greater than 10,000 square miles. If we stop to think about it, that is a relatively small proportion of the 265 constituencies represented here. Only 37, as I say, have areas greater than 10,000 square miles. To approach the question in another way, only eight constituencies have areas greater than 100,000 square miles. Most members who have a constituency of 10,000 square miles in area think it is big. But as I have said there are eight constituencies in Canada which have an area greater than 100,000 square miles.

An hon. Member: Name them.

[Mr. Chretien.]

Mr. Fisher: I will put the list on record.

Largest Canadian Constituencies in Area, with 1956 Population

Constituency	Area in Sq. Miles	Population
Mackenzie River	527,490	12,492
Saguenay	374,950	56,655
Yukon	207,076	12,190
Churchill	170,827	48,999
Port Arthur	148,482	78,111
Grand Falls-White		
Bay-Labrador	125,710	71,416
Skeena	125,641	56,664
Cariboo	120,544	60,464
Meadow Lake	96,327	37,840
Chapleau	83,640	65,456
Peace River	81,900	69,725
Cochrane	70,585	42,720
Athabasca	62,000	56,611
Kenora-Rainy River	52,308	67,356

Those are the 14 constituencies having areas greater than 50,000 square miles. I might say that the population of Saguenay, which the hon. member sitting over there represents, has been growing relatively quickly because of mineral developments in that region. Churchill is another of these large constituencies which has been growing fairly quickly. In considering the population figures, it should be remembered that the two ridings up in the north namely, Mackenzie River and Yukon, are special cases. They do not lie within provincial boundaries and that is one of the main reasons why they have representation here despite their small population.

One of the interesting things to note is that almost all these constituencies, with the exception of Meadow Lake, are of the hinterland variety. They are not rural constituencies in the sense that they have a farm basis. Their population growth has been comparable in almost every way to the national average, if not greater than the national average—certainly, in the case of Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador it has been greater—and it has been based on forestry or mining, developments which do not lead to an even population spread. There is a spotty effect—small nodules of people within these large areas. It is my contention that it is most difficult to represent ridings of this kind, particularly when they have large populations, on any basis comparable to that which applies in the case of smaller constituencies. If we take Canada's estimated population at the time of the last census in 1961—it was 18,238,000—and divide that figure by 247, which is the divisor one uses in determining the population quotient after taking away the population of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories, we reach a figure somewhere between 66,000 and 69,000—I give that figure loosely.

I should like to call attention to the grave disadvantages of representing these immensely large constituencies. For example, the