

Redistribution

Island. You will find this on page 6 of your pamphlet. On February 10, last, a notice of objection in the form of a motion was filed with Mr. Speaker in the following terms, namely:

Proposed Electoral District of the Province of Prince Edward Island:

That, pursuant to section 20 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act (chapter 31, S.C. 1964-65) and for the reasons hereinafter specified, consideration be given by this house to the matter of an objection to the following provisions of the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Prince Edward Island, laid before the house by Mr. Speaker on Wednesday, January 19th, 1966.

The objections to the provisions of the said Report are as follows:

1. In dividing the province of Prince Edward Island into four constituencies, to which it is entitled, the commission obviously failed to give consideration to the relative rate of growth of the population of the Said Districts.

2. The commission failed to take into consideration that the boundaries of the electoral districts as they existed prior to redistribution were in accordance with the common interests of the people living therein, and thereby made it possible to have adequate representation in the parliament of Canada.

3. In assigning names to the districts, the commission failed to select names with sufficient significant application to the areas which they are intended to designate.

4. That in failing to retain the dual riding of Queens the commission aggravated the "relative rate of growth" problem and disrupted a long established and quite satisfactory pattern of representation.

5. And such other objections that the undersigned members may deem necessary to carry out the spirit and terms and conditions of the Act in question.

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Queens): Mr. Speaker, in speaking on behalf of myself and my colleagues who filed objections to the proposed electoral districts for the province of Prince Edward Island, I wish to explain briefly, and as clearly as I can, for the benefit of the commission and the members of the house, the basis of our objections. Our first objection is as follows: that in dividing the province of Prince Edward Island into four constituencies, to which it is entitled, the commission obviously failed to give consideration to the relative rate of growth of the population of the said districts.

I should like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that Prince Edward Island is almost unique as compared with other provinces, with the exception of New Brunswick, with regard to redistribution because, as a result of amendments to the British North America Act in 1915, we are permitted a minimum of four

members. For this reason the electoral quota for Prince Edward Island is much lower than that of most provinces. Since it is highly unlikely that the increase in population in Prince Edward Island will ever be rapid enough to entitle the province to more than four seats, it follows that the problem of adding to or subtracting from the present number of seats will almost certainly never arise in the foreseeable future.

The problem of the Prince Edward Island commission was obviously one of dividing the present population into the four constituencies taking into account, of course, the probable shifts of population concentration within the province in the near future. There will be no question of having to add additional seats or subtract seats in future redistributions, so that this problem does not arise. Since the tolerances allowed in the act were not great enough to allow the county boundaries to be retained as constituency boundaries, it would then appear obvious that the objective of the commission should be to have four constituencies as close to the electoral quota as is practical or if there were to be a variation in the population of the constituencies it should have been in such a way that the constituencies with the greatest growth should have been smaller than the electoral quota, and those with a relative shrinking population should have been above the electoral quota so that the passage of time would cause the population of the constituencies to approach the quota rather than diverge from it.

Surely the objective of the commission should have been a redistribution which would satisfy the requirements of the act for as long a period as possible, without the necessity of additional redistributions after every census. But what is the situation we find in the proposed electoral districts? There are two main centres of growth in Prince Edward Island, namely Charlottetown and suburbs, and Summerside and the surrounding districts. Prince Edward Island is not immune from the national trend of the diminution of the rural population and an increase in the urban population. However, we find the proposed constituency of Hillsborough, with a population in 1961 of only about 2,600 below the maximum allowable, is the constituency which contains the growing city of Charlottetown and practically all its suburbs. I would venture to guess that the population of this proposed constituency is now very close to, if not over, the maximum allowable. Almost certainly it will have to be

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret).]