

Electoral Boundaries Commission

Mr. Pickersgill: I can assure the hon. gentleman that is not in the least necessary in Newfoundland.

Mr. MacLean (Queens): There are two or three things I wish to bring to the minister's attention. I have noted his statement that it is proposed to stand clause 13 until a later time because in his view it is controversial. Arguments have already been put forward by many members indicating why they believe there should be a greater variation than 20 per cent allowed from the unit of representation as far as certain areas are concerned. These arguments have chiefly had to do with rural areas. I agree with them, but I am not going to discuss that point further at this time.

However, I think this same principle applies with great force to another important segment of Canada, and I refer to suburbia. I commend to the minister's attention the speeches that have been made by the hon. member for Carleton and the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond, I believe, in this connection, as well as those by other members. I regret though that as I understand their remarks they have set out certain premises and have come to conclusions which are diametrically opposed to the conclusions that I think the premises justify.

If the minister will bear with me, I say that for this reason. They are concerned with rapidly growing areas in Canada, and I think it is the wish of everybody in the house that these areas should be fairly represented. But I should like to point out that I do not believe this objective can be achieved by having a limited deviation from the unit of representation. If you take the extreme case where the deviation has diminished to the vanishing point and you have an area with the exact population of the unit of representation in 1961—let us say 70,000 for the sake of argument—by the time the commission undertakes the redistribution of this area they will be forced under these circumstances to make the area one constituency regardless of its present population or its rate of growth. On the other hand, if there is a deviation of 20 per cent allowed they can cut the riding down to an area that had a population of roughly 54,000 in 1961, and this would be a desirable thing if it had grown very rapidly in the meantime and now had a population of perhaps 150,000. However, they could make the redistribution even fairer if they were given greater leeway to take into account the rapid growth that might occur from one redistribution to another. In some cases the growth will have already taken place since the last census by the time the commission undertakes the redistribution.

[Mr. MacLean (Queens).]

If you were to allow a deviation of 30 per cent, for example, you could take a riding with a population of 45,000 in 1961, let us say, and still make it into a riding now even if its population should be much above the unit of representation at the time the commissioners are making the readjustment. To take an extreme case, let us say you have an area where there were only 10 people living in 1961 and which may have a population now of 200,000. You would have to do the redistribution on the basis of the fact that there were 10 people living there in 1961. That would be the only variation that would be allowed.

I feel that perhaps this has been overlooked, but I believe if the minister studies these speeches carefully he will come to the conclusion to which I have come, namely that this is another forceful argument for allowing a greater tolerance, at least in this first redistribution which is being conducted on rather an experimental basis. In this way these rapidly growing areas can be reasonably well accommodated and they will not have a population the size of two normal constituencies even at the time they are created.

The other point I want to raise just for a moment relates to dual ridings. I hope the minister will be able to find himself in a position to have one of his colleagues move, at the proper time, that the appropriate section be amended to allow the commission to recommend the retention of the existing dual ridings if they so wish. I do not believe the commission should be obligated to maintain dual ridings, but I believe it should have that option. Dual ridings have perhaps some disadvantages but they also have advantages, and in some ways they are fairer than single ridings to the people who elect members to parliament.

I believe that in Prince Edward Island at first there were three dual ridings which were eliminated following the census of 1891, and five single ridings were created. At a later redistribution the dual ridings were again created, so there must have been a good reason for them. They have continued to be recreated at every redistribution since that time. I believe there is perhaps even greater force to the argument that the other dual riding should be retained, but I will not go into that argument.

However, I should like to give one illustration of what I am talking about. You could have a situation in an election when a member of parliament is elected to this house by a majority of one vote.

Mr. Pickersgill: We have one.