

Electoral Boundaries Commissions

not be confronted with the problem of these enormous constituencies such as York-Scarborough. I believe that in many ways this is one of the most important provisions which could be written into the act in order to secure an equitable redistribution, and I am glad to see it impressed upon the minds of the commissioners as one of the factors to which consideration should be given in the determination of what the boundaries shall be.

Mr. Knowles: I have only a brief word to say. I wish mainly to thank the hon. member for York-Scarborough for giving his answer, at any rate, to the question I posed earlier. It seems to me that the Minister of Transport cannot write off these subclauses. My hon. friend from Port Arthur has made the point that the commissioners will in effect, have to justify any departures they may make by referring to the guide lines given to them by parliament. If we are giving them another guide line, namely the rate of population growth, we should surely be as clear as possible about our intentions. I will settle for not putting the detail into the statute, but the commissioners may well ask the question, what did parliament mean by this relative term "rate of growth"?

The hon. member for York-Scarborough answered the question when he said "You compare official sets of figures". I think it is good to have that on the record in *Hansard*; that this should be done not on the basis of guesswork but on the basis of official sets of figures. On that understanding I am prepared, as is everybody else, I believe, to support the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Macquarrie: There is another matter which arises with reference to clause 13. It has to do with the question of dual ridings of which there are two now in Canada; at one time there were a number of them.

It is noteworthy that down through the years the dual constituencies of Queens and Halifax have been retained. It is obvious that there were reasons, reasons considered good and sufficient, for the retention of these constituencies, whether they were sociological, historical or geographical. In Prince Edward Island at one time the reasoning was mathematical. One of the reasons our province was reluctant or, indeed, unwilling to enter confederation was the opposition put forward to its demand to be represented by six members. Sir John A. Macdonald asked why the province wanted six members. Why not five?

[Mr. Harkness.]

The answer was "We must have six because we have three counties, and you cannot divide three into five". So, with exceptions only for very brief intervals, a dual constituency has been retained there.

It is not for me to prejudge whether there should be a dual riding retained in Prince Edward Island or in Halifax. But I am inclined to think that in the one I know best, in such a small province where the population is large but not dense, there will be no great gain from changing the well known boundaries of the constituencies. I do not want to prejudge the issue and I do not think this house should do so, or trammel the commission in its work. Perhaps the commissions, when set up, may decide it is unwise to have dual ridings in Prince Edward Island and Halifax. They could conceivably reach the conclusion that a better pattern of representation would follow from the establishment of a dual riding somewhere else in the country. But this is a matter for the commissions to look into. We expect good work from good commissions, and I believe it would be a mistake for this legislation to train its guns on two of the existing constituencies, to say that two of the constituencies must be altered and that the commissions shall have no choice, no scope at all to consider whether all the good and sufficient reasons which prompted the retention of these ridings still apply.

I would therefore ask—and surely this is not a controversial matter—that we reserve for the commissions the right to decide whether the existing dual ridings be retained or whether in fact the pattern of representation might be improved by establishing others. Perhaps the commissions will end by abolishing them all; perhaps they will not. But I would think it unfortunate if at this stage we were to legislate two existing ridings out of existence, and I wonder if this could not be prevented.

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps I could say a word about this matter. Since the hon. member for Halifax is unable to be in the chamber himself today, he made very strong representations to me along the lines of those the hon. member for Queens has just made to us.

I have been giving a lot of thought to this question and, like one of the questions I had to consider last evening, it is a difficult one. It is like one or two questions I considered last evening. There are arguments on both sides which are very strong, and if hon. members would be patient with me for a few moments