

Redistribution Commission

members was limited. They had to come up with a stopgap arrangement before an election, which brought a rough measure of greater equity than prevailed previously. But no member who has worked on the job of provincial redistribution in the province of Ontario will tell us that there is a complete solution. The final report, which will be some time being handed down, will have to be studied. In a large province like Ontario or Quebec the job will be a difficult one and time consuming. But certainly any attempt to lump together the Quebec or Ontario problems and combine them with other provinces will in my opinion seriously delay the functions of any group trying to grapple with the problems of redistribution.

Following the statements of the house leader, Mr. Chairman, I will not say any more. I have just one observation to make in connection with my own riding. One of the problems in my riding is that of maps. New suburban areas which are rapidly growing up outside the established boundaries of the city of Ottawa simply do not have the facilities to give an adequate breakdown of polls. I suspect that this is a serious problem, one not to be underestimated, and the services of people from the surveyor general's branch, and so on, will be absolutely essential. But this is a technical problem which takes a little time to overcome.

[Translation]

Mr. Chapdelaine: Mr. Chairman, although I do not intend to speak at great length, it will not make much difference, since members of other parties have indicated that they wish to speak.

It has been mentioned this afternoon that the number of members should be reduced rather than increased. Since everybody agrees and everything has been said I shall only say a few words, in order not to delay the adoption of this resolution.

In my opinion, it is not essential to go into details at this stage, since the government is only giving notice of its intention to introduce a bill. We must make suggestions, as concisely as possible, about matters that might have been overlooked so that they will be included in the bill.

The suggestions made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) are worthwhile. He has looked fully into the problem and he referred to all the discussions held in the house on this matter since confederation. The same applies to the suggestions of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) who has studied this problem extensively. All those suggestions will be considered by the commission when it is established.

The main point is the setting up of this commission as soon as possible. In my opinion, what could delay its establishment is the fear that the selection of its members might be tainted with partisanship.

Such is the difficulty which the government will have to face because even if this commission were composed of judges, it must be remembered that all of them have been appointed by a political party and that it is very difficult for a man to forget his political ties.

In my opinion, there is another alternative concerning the composition of this commission. It would be to appoint people who are too young to have ever been involved in a political organization or to have come under the baleful influence of certain politicians in their circle, or else people too old, having already one foot in the grave, for whom political has no lure whatsoever. Then the grounds for the steps we would be taking would be nobler and would lead to more conclusive results.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that in the riding I represent—the most beautiful of all, needless to say, the riding of Sherbrooke—we also have our redistribution problems, but when this commission is established, the time will then be favourable to make appropriate suggestions in order to settle these small problems. Since 1867, these problems have to be discussed at regular intervals; they come under the purview of the Canadian constitution, which must be amended every time it is desired to increase the membership of the house. As a matter of fact, these problems always brought about harsh political partisanship, because the party that proposed the redistribution was immediately accused of trying to derive some advantages from it, while the previous party that had wanted to change the representation in the house was itself accused of trying to do it for its own benefit.

In my opinion, the best intention the government has shown is to want to relieve the house of this partisanship spirit which always inclined members of parliament to delay such legislation. Unanimity has been achieved—which is surprising, especially on the part of the opposition—and it has been agreed that we must keep partisanship out of this commission.

It was suggested to set up ten independent commissions that would look after the redistribution. That is a good suggestion but I think that the one made by the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher) is preferable, if you believe it is not enough to take the provinces into consideration in this redistribution, but that each area's cultural, territorial and linguistic aspirations must also be considered.