

● (1730)

Mr. John Roberts (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief. Obviously the redrawing of constituency boundaries is a painful experience for us and a very difficult task for the commission. I want to support those who have complimented the commission on its work, on the effort it has made to arrive at a realignment of the constituencies to take into account shifting population patterns. It is important because of the mobility of the population, that, such changes should be made from time to time so that the people may be more accurately represented in the House of Commons. I therefore have no great complaint with the conclusions the Electoral Boundaries Commission has reached.

However, with respect to the area I represent I cannot but regret that one of the traditional parts of the St. Paul's riding, the annex area which is one of the most vital areas of the city and long attached to St. Paul's, will disappear from St. Paul's and be attached to the Spadina riding. I regret very much its moving that part of the constituency. If I might put it in these terms, I feel a sense of loss at not being able to continue to represent the many good friends I have in that area.

The principal reason for which I rise today is to draw the attention of the commission to a small but important incongruence in the new boundary which has been chosen. Those of us who represent urban constituencies are aware that it is often difficult for our citizens to hold very clearly in their minds the boundaries of our constituencies. In a city such as Toronto, where there is a sense of community which far transcends constituency boundaries, it is often the case that people are not clear as to the constituencies in which they are registered. This often becomes evident during elections when workers from a variety of parties manage to put up signs in the wrong places. Many citizens are often not aware of who represents them in their federal parliament, or who is seeking to represent them during an election. There is a tendency in the voters' minds for boundary lines to be fudged. I think it is desirable to render as clearly as possible the boundary limits—to make them correspond to natural divisions within a city, the boundaries of existing provincial constituencies and even of municipal districts.

What is puzzling about the boundaries which have been drawn for St. Paul's is the incongruence I have mentioned. It is that in the northeastern part of the new constituency the boundary line runs steadily along Briar Hill Avenue and then, at Avenue Road, takes a short jog up to Lytton Boulevard. It would seem to me much more consistent if the northern boundary of St. Paul's continued straight across Briar Hill Avenue to Yonge Street. The boundaries of the constituency would then be Briar Hill Avenue, on the north, Yonge Street on the east, the CPR tracks to the south, and the Christie Road and Vaughan Road extension on the west. These boundaries would be more readily grasped by the public than the fudging which takes place by the slight jog in the northeast part of the riding.

The decision of the commission to jog the boundary in that way is puzzling because it runs contrary to the principle established in the legislation, that of attempting to equalize the populations of the constituencies.

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The change I am suggesting would not give rise to a domino effect from one riding to another. It is only that there be a transfer of that small portion of what the Commission suggests should be St. Paul's—from Lytton Boulevard to Briar Hill Avenue—a transfer of that small portion from St. Paul's to the new constituency of Eglinton-Lawrence. If done there would be a more closely approximate equality of population.

By the Commission's proposal, the population of St. Paul's would be 90,732; the population in the Eglinton-Lawrence constituency, as they have described it, would be 89,109. In other words, there is a net difference between the two constituencies of 1,600 citizens more in St. Paul's than in Eglinton-Lawrence. So it seems we would more closely approximate equality of population between the electoral districts if we were to transfer to Eglinton-Lawrence that one small part of St. Paul's, one which is almost, in geographical terms, an unexpected appendage on the northeast corner. In terms of logic and consistency it would appear better to maintain Briar Hill as one solid boundary, and in terms of the proportion of population the population balance would be better.

Since this seems to be a change which would not give rise to a series of repercussions affecting other ridings, and fits more precisely the idea that there should be equality of representation, it would constitute a more logical design and one more readily grasped by the citizens in the area. I would, through you, Mr. Speaker, earnestly beseech the commission to take very seriously into account making this minor but nevertheless logical change.

Mr. Hugh Poulin (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, having now had an opportunity to examine the proposed boundaries of the new constituency of Ottawa-Centre I may say to the commissioners, through you, Mr. Speaker, that I am very serious in making the proposals I am now about to put forward with respect to certain alterations which I believe really ought to be made before any final determination is reached as to the boundaries of this riding.

All the constituencies in the country are, of course, exceedingly important. There are ridings across the land representing the hearts or centres of our cities and they usually bear the names of those cities. The riding of which I speak has some additional significance in that it is in the very heart of the national capital, the city of Ottawa. Since first being elected in 1972, Mr. Speaker, I have had the distinct honour of representing the people of this community and, like the city citizens of so many other ridings, they represent all the ethnic strains which form part of this great country of ours, including the two major founding races, English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians.

After this brief preamble let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I do intend to be brief and I trust the commissioners will take seriously the submissions I am making at this time. The first is with respect to the easterly boundary of the riding of Ottawa-Centre, and in particular the part which has been deleted from the riding and which should properly continue to be part of the riding of Ottawa-Centre.