

Electoral Boundaries

the basis of which these proposals are based was conducted in 1971, five years ago, and the people in the areas affected are entitled to an early decision on the part of the government so they may know in which federal constituency they are to be located. I would urge consideration of the fact that if we are to start from scratch and redraw the maps once again, it would undoubtedly result in further delay before a final decision could be reached, resulting in considerable inconvenience for many people throughout Ontario who are entitled to an early decision.

The next election will be fought on the basis of the new boundaries, and one of our responsibilities to possible candidates and to the party associations is to clear up as soon as possible what the new boundaries will be in order to give them an opportunity to reorganize and start their work in preparation for the next election.

Once again, let me say I am generally pleased with the decisions which have been made with respect to my own constituency. I am sure the hon. member for Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Milne) agrees with the general concept. I am pleased that Dufferin county, for example, will be put into one constituency instead of being divided among two. I am pleased that Grey county, instead of being split three ways, as at the present time, will be split only two ways. I am pleased that in the case of Waterloo county, the regional municipality of Waterloo, the commission was receptive to the brief put forward by the council of the township of Wellesley which objected to their being placed in the Perth constituency when they should more properly be kept in with North Waterloo. I am pleased, also, that the commission recognized the brief which was put in by the township of Wallace asking that they be kept with Perth county and not included in the county of Wellington. I think the commission deserves a great deal of credit for the work it has done.

Mr. F. A. Philbrook (Halton): Mr. Speaker, to come right to the point, the proposal of the Ontario Electoral Boundaries Commission, which would mutilate the traditional federal riding of Halton, is completely unacceptable to my constituents. The eastern half of the new municipality of Halton Hills, of which Georgetown forms the main part, should remain within Halton riding at this time. At any rate, Halton Hills, as an integrated municipality, newly created by the provincial government of Ontario, should remain intact whichever riding it is in.

Let me say at this point that we support the spirit of the representation of the hon. members for Ontario and Thunder Bay ridings that the Ontario commission has not satisfactorily justified its proposals with reasons. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) states that the commission is there to guarantee the democratic wishes of Canadians. Halton feels it unfortunately does just the opposite.

Again, let it be quite clear that Halton is not disputing the loss of the northern one-third of the riding in the current redistribution, that is, the part composed of Erin Village, Erin township and Hillsburgh village. That portion, delightful as it is, is more remote from the southern remainder of the riding, has stronger relations with Wellington and other areas surrounding it, and was invariably lost to Halton sooner or later. Nor are the people of Erin apparently protesting the change.

[Mr. Beatty.]

We made our position quite clear in a combined presentation to the commission in Toronto on October 6, 1975, that we accept their first proposal on the northern Erin loss but totally reject their second proposal on splitting the eastern part of Halton Hills away from us and giving it to a federal riding to the East. Brampton apparently feels that it already has enough to handle and is as opposed to the change as is Halton, for similar reasons of rationalizing electoral boundary lines. However, the only change in the Halton proposal which the commission seems to have made since last summer is to give the Georgetown area to the new urban constituency of Brampton rather than the new rural riding north of Brampton which was to be called Halton-Peel and is now to be called York-Peel. This would seem to make the situation even worse, rather than better. In fact, either change is unacceptable to both sides, either the over-all Halton or Peel regions, either the riding losing the Georgetown area or the riding due to receive it as an unsolicited gift. Last year the local people submitted a combined brief from the two regional governments, and a Halton Hills town council brief, both in support of my own brief as federal MP, all rejecting the commission's proposal.

Our Halton Hills mayor, his Worship Tom Hill, and the Halton regional chairman, Mr. Allan Masson, both appeared in person with me before the commission to present a united stand to keep Halton Hills intact and to keep it for now with Milton and Oakville in the federal riding of Halton.

There are no known differences of opinion on this controversy between anyone in the local areas concerned. Not between Georgetown and Brampton. Not between Halton riding and either Brampton riding or York-Peel north of it. Not between Halton region and Peel region. Not within the various parts of Halton. And there is no partisan difference of opinion, to the best of my knowledge. I have taken the trouble to check, and the political parties involved agree wholeheartedly that the commission's proposal is a tragic mistake. That is, all the citizens involved at the local riding level, whatever their electoral area, whatever their political affiliation, whatever their level of government, are united in being appalled and upset about the commission's proposal for the Georgetown area. There are no apparent dissenters. The commission was so informed last summer but chose to ignore the pleas of these citizens and their elected representatives.

The commission seems to have placed most or all of its emphasis on balancing up the numbers of voters in each riding within the stipulated range. That is one of their main guidelines, but only one. There are, I submit, other important considerations, some official, some just a matter of common sense and recognition of the democratic wishes of the citizens concerned.

We have heard the same points raised time and again in this debate, and I thank my colleagues on both sides of the House for their struggle against these injustices and inabilities. The integrity of municipal boundaries must be maintained, that is, towns like Halton Hills must not be split up. After all, it was the Ontario provincial Conservative or Davis government which created this new municipal unit a few short years ago as part of its regional government movement. Welded together out of the independent juris-