

*The Address—Mr. R. Stewart*

I mentioned also another tradition, that of the House of Commons going to the other place to hear the Speech from the Throne and not even being able to enter that chamber. Most of us have to watch television in order to find out what legislation is to be placed before us. This is completely ludicrous and has no place in our modern parliament.

It seems to me that these things, with some imagination, could be changed and that it would be possible to have a nice ceremony for the opening of parliament. If we were to have fixed dates and a new ceremony for the opening of parliament there is no reason why we could not take advantage of our best weather and combine it with our national day. It just takes a little bit of imagination to plan these things. There are those who say there are too many lawyers in the House. If that is the case, perhaps lawyers are not noted for their imagination or creativity. In any case, there could be many beautiful ceremonies attached to our parliament covering such things as the display of our flag and the singing of our national anthem. If the ceremony were held outside, taking advantage of our good weather on July 1, we could have the national band of the armed forces and that sort of thing and perhaps 100,000 Canadians would be able to assist.

I want to say a few words about the redistribution being proposed for northern Ontario. I usually describe my present riding of Cochrane as being almost the size of France because this illustrates the vastness of northern Ontario. In fact, the riding of Cochrane is slightly smaller than France. Those who are deciding the changes and these new boundaries have undoubtedly said to themselves that this fellow in Cochrane does not have enough with an area the size of France but should be given an area as big as Europe.

The commissioners have decided that the new riding should begin slightly north of North Bay and extend all the way up to Hudson Bay, a distance of almost 1,000 miles. Obviously the individuals making these decisions do not know very much about northern Ontario. This is not unusual as the people of Toronto, generally speaking, do not know much about anything beyond Barrie.

The point that should be made and which is of extreme importance is that we cannot divide up areas that are culturally and socially linked. The new boundary on the western side of Cochrane would be somewhere between Kapuskasing and Hearst, cutting off the area of Hearst, which is 90 per cent French-speaking, and throwing it in with another riding that is almost completely English-speaking, with the closest community of any size being some 200 miles to the west. Anyone who has travelled in that region obviously knows that the town of Hearst belongs within the district of Cochrane because it is linked culturally and socially to that area of northern Ontario which includes Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing and Hearst.

That is one of the things which have been poorly done by the commissioners in their desire to create a riding almost 1,000 miles long. I object to the way things have been done by this commission. I do not know who chose these commissioners, but it is more than I can understand why they all have to be from southern Ontario when

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane)]

northern Ontario is five times the size. There is not one member from northern Ontario on that commission.

If you want to divide up a province you must have people who know about the area involved. The last redistribution was conducted in a similar way with the result that the riding of Cochrane has parts in the western end which really should not have been included because they more properly belong to the area of Sault Ste. Marie. However, they were thrown in with the rest of the riding of Cochrane. That situation is being rectified under the new proposals, but they are even worse because of these other things I have mentioned.

I object to the fact that there has been no consultation with any of the elected representatives in the north, municipal, provincial or federal. Consultation comes only after the fact, and from past experience of what these commissions do I know it is very difficult to get the boundaries changed after the recommendations have been made. Consultations should take place with the people who know the area. I could understand such a situation when the matter was solely in the hands of federal politicians and there were those who tried to divide areas to their own personal advantage, but that is quite different from putting redistribution into the hands of officials who know nothing about the areas and do not seem to want to consult with anyone prior to drawing the boundaries. These are matters which should properly be brought before the commission, and you can be sure that we from northern Ontario will do so.

I was extremely pleased to note in the Speech from the Throne that finally there is to be a special discussion regarding freight rates. This is a matter I dealt with in my maiden speech in the House four and a half years ago. It is a matter that we in northern Ontario have been pursuing over the years, particularly in the past few years, because it affects our whole economy and prevents new industry from coming into the area. It is of great importance to northern Ontario. Of course it is important to other parts of the country as well, but it is of particular importance to northern Ontario because we have had so little consideration in respect of freight rates. I welcomed this reference in the Speech from the Throne and I was particularly happy to note that the railroads have agreed to participate fully.

Our difficulty in the past has not been in getting committees here in Ottawa to listen to us but rather in getting the railroads to come to some realistic agreement. There has been a passing of the buck. They say it is not for them to decide, it is for the Canadian Transport Commission or some other body to consider, and it cannot be done at the governmental level without full consultation with the railroads.

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I wish to say just a word regarding trade not only because I was a member of the Department of Trade and Commerce but because I believe the posture of Canada's trade should change somewhat for the future. I have always felt we have our own common market in this hemisphere. Our largest customer immediately to the south is a country with a population of over 200 million people. However, there are also the countries of Latin