

Redistribution

(2) The commission failed to give full and proper consideration to population growth trends and failed to exercise fully its authority under Section 13 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act in so far as the relationship of the Queen Charlotte Islands to the mainland area of the province contiguous to and including, the city of Prince Rupert is concerned.

(3) The commission, by seeking to place the Queen Charlotte Islands in Coast-Chilcotin, fails to appreciate that this would demarcate and divorce the Queen Charlotte Islands from the mainland area of Coast-Chilcotin for the reasons that the Queen Charlotte Islands have no direct geographic, social, or economic ties or compatibilities with the other parts of Coast-Chilcotin.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I will be just a few moments on this particular motion because I want to deal only with one part of the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin. I should like to say from the outset that in the first place we agree with the principle of redistributing constituencies by way of the commission process and on a non-political basis. I also want to say at the outset that, first I did not bother and, second, I do not particularly care about the political affiliations, if any, of the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for British Columbia.

My concern is with a group of islands called the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is proposed that these islands be removed from the present constituency of Skeena and placed within the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin. The basis of my argument that they should be retained within the riding of Skeena is that the geographic, social and economic ties, connections and compatibilities of the people in the Queen Charlotte Islands are primarily with the coastal area in and surrounding the city of Prince Rupert. Prince Rupert is within the constituency now and it is proposed that it remain so.

The people in the two areas have common problems. They have common relationships through organizations such as chambers of commerce and trade unions with people in the coastal area around Prince Rupert. There are no ties whatever between the Queen Charlotte Islands and the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin. There is no air carrier or air route between the two. There are no common ship or boat connections. There are no radio or television services common to the two areas. There are no papers that are common. In fact, there are none of the things in common which go to establish compatibility between areas. I say that with respect to the Queen Charlotte Islands and the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin.

[Mr. Speaker.]

I took the course of advising the people on the Queen Charlotte Islands of the proposal when it was tabled in the house, and I received in response hundreds of signatures on petitions and forms objecting to the proposal. I have those petitions and forms here. As I understand it, under the law it is not possible to transmit these in a material way to the commission. Therefore I want to place this information on record. There is virtual unanimity of objection by the people of the Queen Charlotte Islands to the proposal that those islands be included in the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin.

Because there is a lack of economic, social or geographic connections it automatically follows—I consider this to be a minor detail but none the less important—that we should look at the difficulties which might confront political organizations, candidates and elected members in getting around the constituency and servicing it after elections. I repeat that there is not the compatibility in the geographic, social and economic senses between the Queen Charlotte Islands and the other portions of Coast-Chilcotin which I submit there ought to be. It would be extremely difficult for political organizations, candidates and elected members to be able to service the area proposed properly. That is a minor but none the less important consideration which the commission ought to take into account.

● (6:30 p.m.)

Of course, by law we are not solely concerned with matters of geography and the like but have to look at the population as well. I have done this and I want to place on the record statistical information about the proposed constituencies and the areas within them in order to lead up to an alternative suggestion with respect to the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin. Within the bounds of the law the maximum population permissible in a constituency in British Columbia is 88,538. The minimum population permissible is 53,123. The proposed riding of Coast-Chilcotin would contain a population, based on the last census, of 55,011. Skeena will contain a population of 55,770. With the removal of the Queen Charlotte Islands from the proposed constituency of Coast-Chilcotin we would encounter a shortage in population because as of the last census, I am informed, there was a population of 3,014 on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Subtracting this figure from a population of 55,011 which will be within Coast-Chilcotin we reach a figure of 51,997 which is 1,126 short of the minimum of