

Electoral Boundaries

In addition the people of Sault Ste. Marie have no community of interest with the people of Blind River, Bruce Mines or Elliot Lake in Algoma riding. Nor can the citizens of the city find much in common with the dairy farmers of Algoma or other cash crop farmers of that riding. There does not seem to be much community of interest between those two parts of the province. The two ridings have little in common economically. Nor is there a cultural community of interest involving the larger urban centre, Sault Ste. Marie, and smaller communities throughout Algoma riding.

I cannot fathom the rationale for breaking up an urban riding, like Sault Ste. Marie, and adding 11,000 of its residents to the riding of Algoma. The hon. member representing Algoma will have to service the extra constituents. He will need to consider their problems and, at the same time, try to please the constituents of the other small municipalities and interest groups in his far-flung riding.

Once the commissioners made the philosophic decision to reduce the number of seats in northern Ontario, they manipulated boundary lines and arrived at a compromise solution. They took portions of large urban ridings in northern Ontario and added them to less populous rural ridings in which the populations were below the minimum magic figure. I understand that this has been done in the case of Sudbury and of Thunder Bay as well.

What the commission has done will not deal with the root of the problem, maintaining 12 seats. I would have preferred it if the commissioners had decided to keep 12 seats, and recognized, as we have argued for many years in the north, that you cannot always abide by a rigid formula of representation by population. You have to take into account the size of ridings in the north. By their nature they are sparsely populated. Therefore one must create ridings which are manageable, which can be serviced. We should not have ridings stretching hundreds of miles from end to end. You can get round this difficulty only by making at least 12 ridings in northern Ontario. Once you go below the 12 riding limit you run into all kinds of difficulties, as is evident in this latest redistribution attempt.

The commissioners tried to soften the blow by reducing the number of northern Ontario seats to 11, but in so doing negated a fundamental principle, the need to keep intact community of interest. The result is an illogical cutting up of urban ridings. One part of the city riding has been added to a rural riding, and both rural and city people are all at ease in the new riding. They find no common ground. Their focus is different, their needs are different, and the result is the sort of discontent we witness at present in northern Ontario.

I cannot propose a solution to the problem of the riding in Sault Ste. Marie alone. I only wish that some people had looked at the map before deciding. If you returned to Sault Ste. Marie those people the commissioners took from the city and added to Algoma, Algoma would still have to find 10,000 population somewhere else. If you tried to amend the Algoma boundary, you would bite into another riding and take population from it. There is a domino effect in this. Once you start tampering with boundaries, no matter in which direction, the population of one riding may go up, but the population of the next riding will go down. That

[Mr. Symes.]

riding may need to recapture some extra population. I do not think the solution necessarily is to leave Sault Ste. Marie alone and to let Algoma find the population it needs somewhere else. I say this because the domino effect comes into play and, in the end, you will be back to square one.

I submit that the commissioners should again examine northern Ontario, realize it is unique, recognize its problems and the difficulties members of parliament face who represent such a vast area, and go back to the drawing board. We say that the 12 seats of the area have worked well. The commission should say, "We shall take into account the geography of northern Ontario and relax the representation by population formula, to make sure that community of interest and geography take precedence."

I repeat, the people of my riding are upset that part of the city will no longer be in the riding of Sault Ste. Marie, but part of the new riding of Algoma. The population of the city opposes any part of the city being put in another riding. The Soo is an urban centre. It has worked well as a community in the past. The people have community of interest and want to see it maintained. I suggest that the commissioners should go back to the drawing board and begin with the basic proposition that we must maintain 12 seats in northern Ontario, and draw the map accordingly. I sympathize with the commissioners; their job is tough. However, we must consider the concerns of the people of northern Ontario. They have legitimate complaints. They have every right to send at least 12 representatives to the Parliament of Canada.

The commission's latest effort, although well-intentioned, has led to discontent and dissatisfaction. The people of the community object to the cutting up of the urban riding. I again say that I hope the commissioners will go back to that basic premise of 12 seats and not cut up urban ridings.

● (2120)

Mr. Ed Lumley (Stormont-Dundas): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. My intervention will be very short because primarily I am satisfied with the recommendations put forward by the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I appreciate the comments of the hon. member for Glenarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Ethier) who was sorry to see the recommendation that Charlottenburgh Township and the village of Lancaster will be lost, although I am happy that the Electoral Boundaries Commission paid heed to the motion put forward by the township of Charlottenburgh, both in 1975 and 1973, requesting that they become part of the riding of Stormont-Dundas. Approximately one half of the population works in the city of Cornwall in the constituency of Stormont-Dundas. Therefore it will be a much more homogenous riding with Charlottenburgh included.

I am also happy to take the latter half of Dundas County. I know I will have big shoes to fill, following the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) who was born in that area. Although I will not be able to eat as much chicken on the banquet circuit as the hon. member, I hope I can accomplish what he has—accomplished in past years.

One of my concerns with respect to the recommendations is that my riding will now be 50 per cent rural and 50 per cent urban, with a population increase of approximate-