

Electoral Boundaries

truly representative of their people. If our ridings get too large, we will not be representing those who elect us because we will not be able to have that many faces. I strongly urge that the commission consider the problem which members from northern Ontario are outlining today. If not, the problem is going to magnify every time there is redistribution.

While we agree that the commission should be independent and should have certain guidelines, I would like to see that stretched as far as possible so that northern Ontario can retain 12 members. In that way we can continue to pay attention to the community of interest. In years to come you will be able to tell, from looking at a member, the kind of people he represents. You will know that he is representing those who elected him as well as their community of interest.

Mr. Peter Daudlin (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, your reference will note I had not intended, by way of filing an objection, to rise and speak on this particular matter. However, I was moved to speak as a result of the objection put on the record by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). I understand his objection and I believe it to be valid. It indirectly touches the riding of Kent-Essex as it now is, and Essex-Kent as it is proposed to be. I have no particular objection. Indeed, I would welcome the inclusion of the municipalities of Harrow and Colchester North and South to the new constituency of Essex-Kent. I would be quite happy to be representative of that area were I fortunate enough to be able to do so.

I must, however, agree with the minister in at least his third argument. Specifically, in making the changes from those proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, dated August 19, 1975, the commission failed to give the residents of the municipalities of Harrow, Colchester North and Colchester South an opportunity to express their views on the revised proposal. Most certainly it should be that the residents be afforded the same opportunity to express their concerns regarding the February 27, 1976, proposal as those who were affected by the draft proposals of August 19, 1975, were able to do at a hearing in Windsor in October of last year.

If one can make general comments and express general concern with regard to the method with which the commission has dealt with Ontario—and, I suspect, the rest of Canada—it is that there seems to have been some simple misunderstanding by the committee with respect to the manner in which individual people in these ridings should be dealt. One of the glaring absences in the method by which people were treated in the whole of this redistribution is that when a person is to be affected by the objection of another, the notice that one might expect to be given to those who would be affected was not in fact given. To bring it down to the specifics of Essex-Windsor and Kent-Essex, a proposal was made originally that two townships and some small municipalities be added to the riding of Essex-Kent to make up for the loss of the city of Chatham, some 36,000 voters.

● (1850)

I might point out that the constituents of the city of Chatham and the constituents of Tilbury North, Tilbury West and Rochester were made abundantly aware that

[Mr. Peters.]

something was happening which would have an intimate effect on their lives. Hearings were held in Windsor and people were invited to come and make objections if they saw fit to those boundary and riding changes. What the commission did, in response to whatever objections were made, was to make changes which would intimately affect other people who had no knowledge at all that those changes were made, what the changes would be or whether they would be affected at all by the changes which were made in Windsor.

If one can assume anything from the fact that those hearings were held in Windsor, it is that the majority of people in these ridings who had received knowledge or, at least, who should have received knowledge from advertisements which appeared in the newspapers, were to a large extent content with what was suggested. I suggest the commission has not given any weight at all to this contentment. I submit that at the end of the debate some changes ought to be made in the statute or in the regulations governing the way in which the commission is to conduct itself, to the end that if they are about to make changes which affect an area which has not been considered, notice should go out to the constituencies affected. In this instance, for example, notices should go out to Harrow, Colchester North and Colchester South before the boundaries of their areas are touched.

In the original proposal, the commission recommended, as I have indicated, that the riding of Essex-Kent include municipalities from Harwich westward to Gosfield North and South, and north to Lake St. Clair, including the municipalities of Rochester, Tilbury North and Tilbury West. I was entirely satisfied with the proposal. Indeed, I filed no objection to it at the meeting of the commission on October 19 in Windsor. I did not appear, nor did anyone on my behalf. In the revisions of February of this year, however, the commissioners, in their collective wisdom, removed the northern municipalities, namely, Rochester, Tilbury North and Tilbury West, and placed them in the proposed constituency of Essex-Windsor, while at the same time removing from the aforementioned riding the municipalities of Harrow, Colchester North and Colchester South, placing them in what will now be the constituency of Essex-Kent.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset of my intervention, I have no objection to the rearranging of the municipalities in terms of the proposal last summer or to the revisions presently under consideration. However, in the interest of fairness I would support any action which would elicit the views of the good people of Harrow, Colchester North and South before the citizens are affected.

The options open to the commission are, admittedly, few. First, there could be a reversion to the August, 19, 1975, proposal provided no serious objections were filed in connection with the municipalities of Rochester, Tilbury North and Tilbury West. This proposal would, I believe, be acceptable to all. As a second alternative, the commission could reaffirm the proposal laid before the House on February 27, 1976, after soliciting the opinions of the residents of Harrow, Colchester North and Colchester South. This, too, would be welcome and totally acceptable, at least to me.