

Electoral Boundaries

wood. That means there will be a population in Edmonton-Strathcona of 105,000. As we can see, that will already exceed the 25 per cent tolerance of the quotient allowed in Alberta, being 77,518. In other words, the map we are considering here in the House is already out of date before being adopted.

By moving the eastern boundary of the riding of Edmonton South further east, as I have indicated, it would give us a population for that riding within the tolerance of the quotient, and also give us a population in the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona within the tolerance allowed.

Those are the points I specifically wish to draw to the attention of the commission along with the representations of my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton West. I find myself in total agreement with his intervention. I would ask of the commission where it is in the law that the city boundaries must form the boundaries of the constituencies? This does not in fact exist in law to my knowledge and, moreover, would not make any sense in the case of Edmonton. As I already pointed out, the area would include Sherwood Park and Saint Anne lying off the south boundary of the city, but very much a part of the urban orientation, and ought to be considered as urban communities in the urban constituencies.

If these changes were made I believe the map and the character of the ridings in Edmonton would be much more realistic and would enable members of parliament to serve their constituents better. I plead with the commission to end this silly jumping of the river before it is too late, as it totally distorts both the ridings of Edmonton West and the present riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. The changes I have urged are in the interest of allowing us to serve our constituents better.

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, keeping in mind the fact that many individuals wish to speak on the boundary proposals, my remarks will be brief.

I do wish to share with the House a portion of the presentation I made to the boundaries commission when it was in Edmonton. I will quote one page from the presentation I made at that time as follows:

The legislation governing electoral boundary realignment does place an emphasis on population as the basis for constituency composition, yet it must be clear that the 25% tolerance was intended to be fully meaningful. With this in mind, it should be noted that the Pembina constituency could easily reach a population of 120,000 by the time of the next election when these boundaries would be in effect.

This constituency has one of the highest growth rates of any in Alberta.

The population figures of the electoral districts are based on the 1971 decennial census. Since 1971 to the beginning of 1975, the population of the proposed Pembina constituency has increased by approximately 26,150. The population in 1971 was 70,352, based on the figures published by the commission and since that time, to the beginning of 1975, the population has increased in areas such as (1) Sherwood Park by some 11,500, (2) County of Strathcona, excluding Sherwood Park, 4,900 (3) St. Albert, 7,700 (4) Fort Saskatchewan, 1,800 and (5) Westlock, 250. This makes the present population approximately 96,502.

If these figures are projected to the time of the next election, it is conceivable that the population could be at the time in the vicinity of 120,000.

As was pointed out earlier, population does play an important role in regard to the constituency composition but other factors must also be taken into account. Surely the public interest demands more than mere statistical neutrality. Factors such as geographical divisions, commu-

[Mr. Roche.]

nity interests, historical tradition and, most importantly, the interests of the individual citizens who are to be served by their member of parliament, and the member of parliament's accessibility to serve them.

I should like to commend the commissioners for their handling of this difficult task and for considering certain recommendations I presented at the time of their hearings. They did include in the constituency of Pembina certain parts of the county of Strathcona that have an historical and geographical link with the Pembina constituency.

We, as members, must recognize the difficult task the commission has in redrawing these constituency boundaries. With that in mind I should like to raise several points of concern to me.

● (0100)

There has been a certain amount of criticism levelled with regard to the geographical makeup of Pembina by several of its residents because it is a constituency comprised 50 per cent of urban individuals and 50 per cent of rural individuals. However, I feel strongly that there is not much the matter with a constituency that is comprised of a rural-urban mix, because if an individual comes to this Chamber with simply a narrow view of one segment of our society, he has no place in this Chamber. We must be more open minded. We must be able to recognize the difficulties and problems of the different individuals in our society whether they be of an urban or rural background.

Under the proposals put forward by the commission we in the Pembina constituency will lose a portion of both the rural area of our constituency and the urban area of our constituency. We will lose the area which is the city of Edmonton itself, plus the rural area in the Athabasca region and in the Barrhead region, but we will gain the town of St. Albert.

I welcome this area with open arms into our constituency. I feel that areas such as St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan and Westlock all have similar problems. They are all rapidly growing areas on the outskirts of the city of Edmonton. I feel this will make it much easier for a member of parliament to represent these areas even though there might be a certain amount of conflict between the areas because they are both growing and have hopes concerning the recreational and other needs of a growing community.

While I recognize the wisdom of the comments of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) I also recognize that a constituency such as is drawn by the commission for Pembina is a valid constituency, in my eyes. One thing I do not find to be valid, however, is the passage of a bill through this House such as we had a short while ago whereby we increase the representation in this House by 18 members. I was totally against that proposal. I do not believe there is a need for an increase in the representation in this Chamber.

A member should have the capability to serve quite easily a few thousand more constituents. Rather than increase the size of the representation in this House I believe it is essential that a member be given the accommodations necessary if he is to serve those constituents. I think it would be more valuable to invest a little more money for staff members to properly help opposition members than to spend the money on extra representation in the Chamber.