

and Thunder Bay, as well as here in Ottawa, to indicate support for the present 12 members from northern Ontario as well as representations and support for this position by all hon. members on both sides of the House. When the number of seats in the House of Commons was increased by the 1973 bill, seven additional seats were given to the province of Ontario, and we believed that surely we in northern Ontario would be able to maintain our present number of seats. I certainly hope that the commission will review this matter after the representations have been made in this debate.

If the commissioners would consider the special situation in northern Ontario, they would see why we should maintain the present number of seats in the House. By northern Ontario standards, the riding of Algoma is a medium-sized constituency; but even at that it is some 390 miles from one end to the other and it is not all combined in two or three municipalities. There are literally dozens of villages, hamlets, rural municipalities and unorganized municipalities, as well as several good-sized towns. Ridings like Thunder Bay, Kenora-Rainy River and Cochrane North are rural ridings which are even larger. I believe that they are the three special ridings under schedule F of the Canada Elections Act and they have to have earlier nomination meetings.

The constituents of rural ridings look to members of parliament, their riding officers and staff for special services which often are not necessary in urban ridings. Often the office of a member of parliament in a constituency is the only federal government office serving that constituency which is able to deal with problems relating to every government department.

If we examine the proposed redistribution, we can see that in northwestern Ontario the five present ridings will be reduced to four, and we can only ask ourselves how we can expect to maintain the standard of representation with only four members as opposed to five. Likewise, the citizens of that area will ask how they can expect to have the same standard of service with one less member of parliament and his staff. It can only be expected that we have the kind of representation we have had during the last 24 years or so in the House if we maintain the present number of representatives from northern Ontario.

In the redistribution which took place in 1966, which I believe was the first under the independent commission, the tendency seemed to be to separate rural and urban ridings. Some described this as the doughnut approach whereby the rural riding contained the small communities surrounding cities and the outlying rural area and the cities were separate constituencies. I believe this method has served very well. Often the people of rural areas feel they do not receive as much attention as that of city or urban centres.

Using the approach of having urban and rural ridings separated has served very well. Previous to that, ridings—at least in the Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie and, I believe, the Thunder Bay areas—were composed of mixed rural and urban areas. If one looks at the map of northern Ontario it is easy to see the great difficulty in trying to redistribute the ridings on an equitable and fair basis. The present redistribution tends toward the low end of the average population, either in the low 60,000s or middle 60,000s.

Electoral Boundaries

However, Kenora-Rainy River has a population of some 71,000, and Nickel Belt in Sudbury has about 90,000, so there certainly is enough population to justify at least that additional seat by maintaining the present number of 12 members of parliament from the north. Essentially, the commission has added to the riding of Algoma the township of Prince and a portion of the southeastern corner of the city of Sault Ste. Marie, which amounts to about 11,000 additional people added to the present Algoma riding.

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The other boundaries do not add significant areas of territory or population. Essentially, I have not received any representations from Algoma opposing the proposed redistribution. There is a history of the city having been a portion of the Algoma riding up to the 1968 federal election. Many of the services and agencies serving the rural part of Algoma are provided by the city of Sault Ste. Marie. A great number of the people living in the rural riding work in the city of Sault Ste. Marie. I have, however, received representations from the city council and the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie opposing putting a portion of the city in with the Algoma riding. Mainly, this was on the basis of mixing rural and urban areas, the community of interest being different, and so on.

I received some favourable comment from individuals looking at it from the point of view that there would be two representatives from Sault Ste. Marie with additional service from two members. However, the main representations from the city were indicated by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) when he spoke last evening. Representations from at least the city council and the provincial member opposed part of the city going into the rural riding. With these objections, we might ask what the alternatives would be. I must say that they are probably less workable than the ones proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. We have some idea of how the commissions would think, because this is the fourth set of maps that has been prepared; therefore we have some idea of the alternatives they would propose.

In the 1973 preliminary maps they proposed putting a large portion of the northern area of the Algoma district into the Algoma riding. That would have added some 20,000 square miles of territory. The disadvantage to that is the large amount of additional territory for a representative to cover and service, as well as the large number of miles to drive in order to provide service.

Another problem arises with this redistribution. Both Cochrane North and Timmins-Chapleau would lose if we were to bring the Algoma federal riding to the minimum levels required under the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. Their population base would slide below the minimum limits. The second proposal made in the final set of maps in the 1973 report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission was to put a portion of Sudbury in the Nipissing riding in with the Algoma riding. That would be a difficult proposal to see established because there is very little community of interest even though the size of the communities may be very similar. There is certainly no working relationship that we have ever had historically.

The present riding has representation from three territorial districts. This would be a fourth. I think it is an