

Electoral Boundaries

I am not in favour of the recommendation that the name of my constituency be changed from York-Sunbury to simply Fredericton. The constituency of York-Sunbury was established under the Redistribution Act of 1914 and was an excellent choice of name since it reflected the amalgamation of the former constituencies of York, Sunbury and Queen's.

Organizations in the Fredericton area, such as the York-Sunbury Historical Society, have also taken this name to reflect the rich United Empire Loyalist tradition of the region.

Fredericton is, indeed, the largest population centre in the constituency, but to drop the name York-Sunbury is to ignore the importance of dozens of small communities surrounding the capital, which were established long before Confederation.

Perhaps the most wasteful provision of the Act is the amalgam method of determining the number of seats the House of Commons will have. It starts with a base of 75 seats for Quebec, adds four for each redistribution, then follows a most complicated formula to reach the allotment for the other Provinces.

The result will be the addition of 28 new constituencies in 1984. As a share of the tremendous Ottawa and constituencies administrative and logistic support structure, it will drain more than \$14 million out of the public Treasury each year. I submit that we cannot afford to increase the number of seats, nor is it necessary to do so.

In the United States, Senators and Congressmen represent about 413,000 voters each, but their local and Washington offices are manned by much larger staffs. Since each of us represents an average of only 80,000 to 85,000 constituents, with no increase, or in some cases with a relatively modest increase, of staff and other support elements, we could serve our slowly increasing population as efficiently, and far less expensively than the alternative of a larger House.

We all know how difficult it is for middle and backbench MPs to be recognized during Question Period. Imagine the scene when 310 Members are competing for the Speaker's attention. Debates on major Bills will inevitably be slower, too, in order to give every Member who wishes to speak a chance to do so. We have a backlog of legislation to consider now, but the logjam can only grow if we must allow even more participants in each debate.

I would urge the Government and all Hon. Members to consider freezing the situation as it now is and referring the matter to a Parliamentary Committee for careful and thorough study before we proceed.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate today. This is one of those strange occasions when a Member on one side of the House finds himself in almost total agreement with what has been said by a Member on the other side of the House.

As you come from New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker, you will know that my constituency is adjacent to that of the Hon. Member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Howie). It is also adjacent to the constituencies of Gloucester, Westmorland, Kent, Fundy-Royal Restigouche, Madawaska-Victoria, and Bonaventure-

Îles-de-la-Madeleine, as well as a couple of constituencies in Prince Edward Island. It is rather centrally located.

I concede immediately that the population of my constituency is considerably below the mean population. However, it is above the minimum population for constituencies in New Brunswick. The changes proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, while adding many hundreds of square miles to the territory, would increase the population from 56,362 to 57,165. That means that for about 800 people, many square miles would be added to what is already the largest constituency, geographically, in New Brunswick and, I believe, the largest constituency, geographically, in the three Maritime Provinces.

• (1240)

Furthermore, the basic reason given by the Commission was to supplement the population of the electoral district of Northumberland-Miramichi, but only by about 800. Originally the Commission proposed that an additional parish from Kent County, the parish of St. Louis, be added to Northumberland-Miramichi. Because of representations made to the Commission by residents of the parish of St. Louis, the proposal has been dropped. This destroys the argument that they are making additions to increase the population.

As the Hon. Member for York-Sunbury said, the proposed additions to Northumberland-Miramichi include parts of the parishes of Douglas, Stanley and St. Mary's in York County and part of the parish of Maugerville in Sunbury County. That part of the parish of Maugerville which is proposed to be added is very sparsely populated. As the Hon. Member rightly pointed out, there is no direct access from Northumberland County to Sunbury County without first going to Fredericton and Oromocto. These people would have to travel very long distances to reach the constituency office in Northumberland-Miramichi. The representative, whoever he or she might be, would have to travel very long distances to reach what is now known as the riding of York-Sunbury. It makes no sense whatsoever. There can be no rationale for that kind of cosmetic change. In fact, it makes very poor cosmetics.

As far as those parts of the parishes of Douglas, Stanley and St. Mary's in York County are concerned, there can be no argument that they are not adjacent to the constituency of Northumberland-Miramichi, but I could make many arguments that the population of those parts of parishes does not in fact have a community of interest with the Miramichi. There is some community of interest, just as there is a community of interest between Edmundston and Nackawic or between Bathurst and Buctouche or between Saint John and St. Mary's.

Mr. Mazankowski: What about *Ecum Secum*?

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): We will deal with *Ecum Secum* in another debate. The fact is that because we are all New Brunswickers we have a community of interest, but the fact also is that there is no commercial or professional