

Electoral Boundaries

mandering, as so many people tried to suggest, but which is the figment of rather fertile imaginations.

They are people who think that citizens are mere statistical ciphers and that you can take a number of people in an area, put them together like so many head of cattle in a corral, and say that will be a constituency, regardless of the community of interests, the composition of that community or other factors. Yet all too often this is what we have had. In 1973, the last time the commission did such a universally poor job, this House put a stop, by law, to the operation of its reports.

● (1940)

Then I think it committed a second mistake, and that was to try to get out of that difficulty by agreeing to some sort of fanciful formula where by every ten years the number of members in this House and the number of ridings in this country would automatically be increased. Why to save face for someone, or so that a province would not diminish in numbers relative to others which have more rapid growth? We do the very same thing within provinces. We recognize that certain areas may have to have a seat suppressed or combined with another one, but it is all wrong in so far as a province is concerned.

I am not going to enter into the litany of complications which this will give rise to in this House after the next general election when eighteen more seats will have to be found in the Chamber. I think we will need baskets hanging from the ceiling, or we will have to appropriate some of the balconies in order to give appropriate room to all the members. Then ten years hence it is expected, at the same growth rate, that we might approach 300 in number. People will say that this House has too many speakers and that there are too many speeches made. This is only compounding the problem, but that is not what I am trying to get at in this debate.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The members will all have to be my size.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Even though the hon. member represents two sheets of paper in size, looked at sideways—contrary to myself—he still occupies a desk the same size as mine, and his chair is the same size, and that is so for all the other hon. members. However, what I am concerned about is what I think has always been a fundamental mistake by both of the commissions.

Unfortunately the House committed a third mistake during the winter of 1974-75 when, persuaded by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid), there was removed from the list of factors which were to be considered by redistribution commissions the one known as growth potential, and this was adopted by hon. members on both sides of the House. I remember during private members' hour seeing that bill come up from the bottom of the list and then being passed. I moved a quick amendment, and I remember in my speech that I said the House did not realize the noose into which it was shoving its neck for general redistribution when that particular factor was being removed.

This came home to me during the hearings last September and October. I will be the first to say that the redistribution commissioner, Mr. Castonguay, said to me in public

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

court that I was the only one who saw the trouble at the time, and that this was a factor which was causing all sorts of difficulties, particularly in urban and suburban ridings. I just heard the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. O'Sullivan) say that the commission ignored certain growth factors in parts of the city of Hamilton and its suburbs. Of course it did because the House, in its lack of wisdom or in a moment of mental aberration, removed the growth potential as a factor.

Now I should like to turn to the representations which were sent to me by the former member for St. Paul's, Mr. Ronald Atkey. He makes the same points which have been made by many members. First, with regard to the present boundaries of St. Paul's, the boundaries proposed by the commission are likely to cause confusion among the electorate in that there is no conformity with existing provincial and municipal boundaries.

How many times have we seen voters totally confused because of helter skelter boundaries? Gracious only knows, the clerk of the provincial house is usually a member of these commissions, and there is no way they seem to be able to bring the boundaries together. It passes the wit of man to see why they cannot do this. But no, if when one commission divides constituencies on, shall we say, a vertical pitch, north and south, you can bet your bottom dollar that the next commission will divide them on a lateral basis, east and west, merely to introduce total and utter confusion in all corners.

The federal riding of St. Paul's will overlap five provincial constituencies: St. Andrews', St. Patrick's, St. George's, Eglinton, Bellwoods and Oakwoods; and five municipal wards, three wards in the city of Toronto and two wards in the Borough of York.

There is another factor. Federal members and provincial members must work in close liaison. It does not matter what party they represent; the paramount consideration is looking after the interests of citizens. I do not care a fig for the norm of some 76,000 which some people slavishly adhere to, trying as much as possible to keep to that norm—one man, one vote. That is a lot of tripe.

What is required is the best possible service from members of parliament and members of provincial legislatures to the people concerned. That is why we exist, and we know from the changing role of members of parliament, both provincial MLA's or MPP's, that the federal member today has a role he did not have 10 or 15 years ago, a much greater role of constituency ombudsman in which he has to give service, and people have to come to recognize this as the point. But gracious me, when you get a mish-mash of boundaries which make Clapham Junction just outside London look like a simple matter, I just wonder why commissioners cannot see that.

Third, there is a natural community of interest which exists in various parts and in various cities. There are community interests in my city of Edmonton and in the city of Toronto, and in mid town Toronto there are natural flows of community interest. In St. Paul's, for instance, by making the riding more of a lateral than a vertical shape the proposal seems to ignore the natural north-south community of interest which centres around the Yonge Street subway. People who work in downtown Toronto and take the subway to work—principally those east of Bathurst