

felt at a grave disadvantage in seeing that it has its fair share of interest from the national Parliament of this country.

I want very quickly to repeat what the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) said and indicate to the House that I think the work done by the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Ontario, as it applies to the north of the Province of Ontario, was exemplary in every way. It did an outstanding job. It was responsive, sympathetic and understanding. I can just give one example without boring the House with details. There were some suggestions in its first report which my constituents found to be unacceptable. Certain community of interest principles were seriously violated. I, and representatives from these communities made representations in Sudbury. The Commission responded positively and every recommendation that was put forward was accepted, because it was acceptable and it recognized a basic principle that we in northern Ontario all must accept, and that is that if we want to retain our level of representation, there must be a little give and there must be some take.

That is what bothered me so much when I listened to the speech of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt. Here we are not speaking of a constituency being picked on. We are not speaking of a constituency being dealt with in some kind of random fashion. We are not speaking of being fiercely protective of our own little constituency in terms of population. What we are speaking of is a region of this country that deserves to be represented in the Parliament of Canada. I suggest that those interests go far beyond whether a community in one corner of one constituency of northern Ontario will be relocated in another. There is a larger issue here, and it is for that reason that I have risen to speak in the debate.

I said that the Electoral Boundaries Commission was responsive in Sudbury, but there were those who made representations in Sudbury along the lines of "Do not in any way touch my constituency; do not alter it in any fashion whatsoever because I have become very attached to it, it is mine; it belongs to me and leave it the way it is". I found that kind of representation to be reprehensible. I heard it again today and I think it is unacceptable. At the end of those proceedings in Sudbury, I commented to the Commissioners; "if you listened to the arguments that you have heard here today of not touching one constituency that has a rather larger number of persons than other constituencies, if you were to follow that pattern, then northern Ontario would again suffer the loss of a constituency". All of the Commissioners nodded their heads affirmatively and quite vigorously, agreeing that that would be the exact outcome.

There is no comparison between the present Electoral Boundaries Commission for the Province of Ontario and its predecessor which drew up the boundaries with which we had to deal in 1979. This is an enlightened Commission which was responsive, doing an excellent job. The one in 1979 was close-minded, doing severe damage to northern Ontario. We are still suffering from the effects of its decision which was a totally unnecessary one.

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act

Because it is so directly related, it might now be a good moment to pay a word of tribute to the late Hon. R. K. Andras, who took such a profound and deep interest in the whole region of northern Ontario for which he had responsibility. When the Electoral Boundaries Commission made its unfortunate decision, I remember well how the Hon. R. K. Andras, in this very House, drafted a Bill which would have allowed northern Ontario to retain its level of representation. Only in the dying moments of the debate, because there was not enough time allowed, and because we needed unanimous consent and someone would not give it, did we fail. However, I want to pay tribute to a man who not only had a great national constituency and was an outstanding Parliamentarian in terms of representing his own riding, but also one who, when it came to paying attention to his regional responsibilities and doing it in a way which was genuine, coming from the heart, demonstrated that kind of leadership which is difficult to replace. We sadly miss the Hon. Bob Andras in northern Ontario.

I will close by saying again that the Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has done good work. If it listens carefully to what the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt said and it can make some modest changes to meet her demands, that is fine. However, if it must reduce northern Ontario by another seat, then I say to the Commissioners: "Reject totally and out of hand the representations made by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Questions or comments?

Hon. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, when I came to the House of Commons in 1965, I had a small, neat, compact constituency of only 55,000 square miles. After the redistribution that took place in 1969, my constituency expanded to about 75,000 square miles, but the Commission did so by taking the heart of the constituency out so that when I wanted to go from one end of the constituency in a north-south direction to the other, I had to go through the constituency which was then represented by the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior who was then the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay. The next redistribution took my constituency to a size of 155,000 square miles. The proposed redistribution will reduce it to about 150,000 square miles.

The prospect in my constituency has been massive increases in size. The problem is that there has been no one centre in my riding. What I have is a group of small little towns scattered so that there is no one centre one can go into with a view to being able to capture the attention of the bulk of the population.

We have accepted the fact that this constituency has grown with such tremendous force over the last 20 years because the price of doing so has been to allow northern Ontario to maintain more seats than it might otherwise have had under another kind of distribution system. Our dilemma is that our population is marginal from the point of view of holding 11 seats. Furthermore, the population tends to be concentrated in particular areas, leaving vast areas with relatively small populations.