

sher Bay. If you look at the map of the vast district of the north of Canada above the sixtieth parallel, you will see that we are considering an expanse of land some 4,000 miles across the high Arctic barrens. I think a compromise will need to be worked out in this regard, if there is to be a division which makes sense in terms of lines of communication and trade. Certainly, Victoria Island and Banks Island should be included.

This afternoon I spoke largely in historical terms, because this question is of historical importance. The idea we are discussing has long been in abeyance, but has come to the fore because of the persistence of the northern peoples. They have evinced a desire for greater independence and responsible government. Although this move will not bring about two separate territories as was originally proposed in 1962, at least it is the beginning of a move in the right direction and, as such, all members of this House should support it warmly and heartily. I hope that in due course the division recommended by the Electoral Boundaries Commission will become two new territories. We look forward to the day when the great expectations of that area of Canada will come to pass, that the 3.5 million square miles of territory rich in resources, human and natural, will eventually come into its own. Perhaps it will need a change of government to achieve this. The people of the north will decide that in due course. This afternoon I wanted to draw the attention of all hon. members, and of the people of the north, to the historical precedents of this step that is being taken.

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission of the Northwest Territories. I support the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth), who asks for the name of the riding in the western portion of the Territories to be changed. I agree that the part to which he refers should be known as the Western Arctic rather than the Mackenzie Arctic.

The report of the commission studying the Northwest Territories is unusual in that it made a majority and a minority report. The four commissioners split down the middle; the chairman cast the deciding vote. As a result we now have two maps, one based on the majority and one on the minority report.

Section 7(2) of the Northwest Territories Representation Act sets out the rules which the commissioners must follow in deciding the division of electoral boundaries in the Northwest Territories. Section 7(2) reads, in part:

- (a) There shall be in the Northwest Territories two electoral districts each of which shall return one member; and
- (b) in dividing the Northwest Territories into electoral districts and describing the boundaries thereof, the commission shall give special consideration to the following factors:
 - (i) ease of transportation and communication within the electoral districts;
 - (ii) geographical size and shape of the electoral districts relative to one another; and
 - (iii) any community or diversity of interests of the inhabitants of various regions of the Northwest Territories.

Those rules govern decisions for the drawing of electoral boundaries.

Electoral Boundaries

I now refer to the majority report, which reads in part:

... the commission in its proposal considers that the factors of geographical size and shape and community of interests of the inhabitants are more important and of a more lasting nature. The proposed division is the closest division that can be made so as to as much as possible give recognition to the traditional life and cultural patterns of the majority of the indigenous peoples while at the same time paying deference to the other factors.

In other words, the commission stated it made a decision according to geographic size and community of interest. If you examine the map accompanying the majority report, you will see that the eastern region is between four and five times the size of the western region. In other words, the majority decision was not based on geographic size. I suggest it was based on rule No. (iii), the community of interest rule. The minority report reads in part:

We are confirmed that after the public sittings and the subsequent meetings of this commission, the recommendations published in October 6, 1975, in the *Canada Gazette* and in various newspapers by the commission was, in our opinion, the product of the proper application of the rules set out in section 7(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act...

As the hon. member for Northwest Territories said, the Inuit Tapirisat association of Canada has presented land claims to the Government of Canada. I have examined the claims of the ITC, looked at the boundaries suggested by the majority report, and at the land claims of the Inuit people. There is a considerable difference between the boundary lines. If the government accepts the land claims of the Inuit, the boundary of the territory which the ITC wishes to call Nunavut will not coincide with the electoral district proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Commission. Therefore, some time in the future we shall need once again to reconsider the electoral boundaries.

When I began I mentioned that the commission was divided in its opinion and that the chairman cast the deciding vote. Bearing that fact in mind, and remembering the rules laid down in the Northwest Territories Representation Act, I urge the commission to review the report and make a decision based on rules (i), (ii) and (iii) of section 7(2), to which I referred. The decision should not be based on one rule alone.

● (1600)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. Is there any further debate on the objection for the Northwest Territories?

The House having considered this objection, it will be my duty, pursuant to section 20 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to refer the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, together with a copy of the objection and also a copy of the debates of the House, back to the commission for reconsideration thereof.

OBJECTIONS TO COMMISSION REPORT RESPECTING ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The House will now proceed to the consideration of the objections to the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Ontario which were grouped for the purpose of consideration.