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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Boundary Revisions Are Stirring Interest

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THE CHANGES in the boundaries of federal ridings in this province suggest some interesting possibilities to me.

An announcement in this paper on Saturday by the Tweedy Commission – Judge George J Tweedy is chairman – suggests in future the four Island ridings will be Cardigan, with 23,081 people; Hillsborough, with 30,050 – it includes Charlottetown; Malpeque, which includes the Western part of Queens and takes in parts of Prince which includes the 4th Prince District, has 22,207 people, and the Western part of Prince is to be known as Egmont. It has 29,291.

If somebody is wondering about the new names, it is fairly obvious that the districts have been named for the major bays in the area.

Perhaps the most interesting possibility, the way I see it, lies in the fact that Kings – up to now the counties have been the electoral riding – has always had a Roman Catholic representing it in the House of Commons, since the representation was reduced to one member, and that goes back to the turn of the century.

WAY BACK in 1846 the Scots and Irish fought a bitter battle that history has dubbed the “Belfast Riot”. There were people killed on both sides – nobody ever knew the number, I’ve been told; many others were injured.

I know that’s almost 120 years ago but the riot has never been completely forgotten. In some sections of Belfast the old sores have never healed. As a result a Roman Catholic member has never been elected in the Belfast district, a provincial riding. Because Belfast is a part of Queens, a Roman Catholic has never represented the county. Neither of the old parties would even nominate one.

Incidentally, I saw more than a year ago, one of the shillelaghs used in the “riot”. It’s an Irish Blackthorn stick that came from the Auld Sod. Naturally the stick has historic value today, but the owner asked me not to reveal his name, so I’m keeping faith with him.

I tried for some time to get enough facts on the fight, and the background, to do an accurate and an impartial column on it. I made some progress but not nearly enough, so I’ve dropped the idea for the present.

Interesting Possibilities Seen

And now we are going to have this Belfast district tacked on to Kings, where they’ve never had anything else but a Roman Catholic represent them. It suggests some interesting possibilities.

They have an exceptionally fine young man, John Mullally, representing Kings in the Commons now. I can’t imagine anyone turning him down, particularly a Liberal; and Belfast is predominantly Liberal.

I'm wondering – and I admit I'm only hoping – if the result may be that at some future date we may have candidates chosen for their individual ability, instead of for their religious persuasion. Of course I'm thinking of all four Island ridings. I cannot recall when we had a Roman Catholic member in any of the other Island seats. It just doesn't make sense to me that a Protestant should never have a chance to be an MP in one district, and a Roman Catholic never have a chance in the other three.

BEFORE I leave this district, I should add that it also contains Mt. Stewart, a part of the present Third Queens district. And, as I see it, the Cardigan federal riding should lean to the Liberals.

To Charlottetown the commission has added Third Queens – I'm speaking in general terms. Charlottetown has been strongly Conservative over the years. Third Queens is Liberal, but it's not big enough to offset Charlottetown. Here is a safe Tory seat. I see a battle between Angus MacLean and Heath Macquarrie to get the nomination here. Whoever gets it should be home free.

But the Malpeque seat should be as close to a safe Liberal seat as you can get in the province. Rural Queens has always been regarded as Liberal – Charlottetown was always the big Grit obstacle – and now they've added the predominantly Liberal 4th Prince district. Unless Liberal fortunes are terribly low, the PC who nominates here, any PC, will have rough going indeed.

Tougher Fight In Egmont

TO BE accurate, I have to note that Malpeque also has a bit of Fifth Prince, the Summerside district, and that included the airport. But where does that leave the rest of Prince which comprises the Egmont riding?

I know Prince has been strongly Liberal. Not since A. A. Lefurgey won for the Tories in 1904 by the slim margin of 24 votes, has a Conservative ever won Prince with the exception of the years 1957 to 1963 which were disastrous for the Grits right across the country.

But I suggest that the predominantly Liberal 4th District played a major role in achieving that effect. Now the 4th District is gone. If there is a really unhappy MP in this province now, it just has to be Solicitor General Watson MacNaught. The way I see it, the Egmont constituency is now weighted towards the Tories. It should be tough fighting ground for a Liberal in future.

THE NEW boundaries will cause political changes in several ridings. But the overall result will be much the same. We have two Liberals and two PCs now. It's often been that way. Two of the new ridings favor the Tories, two favor the Liberals. There's nothing new about that, but the individual ridings offer some interesting possibilities.

Six hearings have been advertised, two at Charlottetown, and the others at Georgetown, Summerside, Souris and Alberton. The commission will be there to hear reaction. But here's the all important thing to remember:

“No representation shall be heard by the Commission at its sittings unless notice in writing has been given, stating the name and address of the person by whom the representation is sought to be made and indicating concisely the nature of the representation and the interest of such person”. That's a direct quote from the regulation laid down. Notices have to be postmarked not later than May 16 in this

province. If they are not, no representation will be heard. Judge Tweedy and his commission have no other choice.

NEXT WEEK'S column will tell the story of an Island man who has built up a large mail-order business which stretches from Newfoundland to Alaska.