Some Quietly Wept When Reapportionment Voted

By KALENDA COLLINS

Read before Representative Vermont House

MONTPELIER, VT — For better or for worse, the Vermont House is reapportioned.
After 174 years, one era comes to an end and another begins. No longer will sharp differences between Senate and House beiong on the same bill be as apparent.
"After all, no one can get this bill through," is often heard around the legislative halls, during this administration of Vermont's first Democratic governor in 169 years, Gov. Phil- ip H. Hoff. This remark has been made in reference to stream pollution, state-wide zoning laws, regionalization of schools and highways.

Hoff watched from the gal- lery as representatives took turn- ful action Friday to reapportion themselves into a 135-member House from the present 216-member House. He watched as Rep. Frank Hutchinson, R-Stamford, a Northeastern Vermont town of 11,790 people, asked to have his town adjourned to another voting dist- rict and turned to turncoat Hutchins went as he spoke about the "outsiders" in the Vermont Legislature, "into our parlors and try to change things."

HOFF WATCHED, chain smoking and paced in and out of the House from the front entrance as Rep. Clark Hutchinson, R-Rochester, in quiet but eloquent discourse said, "Let me repeat to you some of our grievances against a man who seeks to interfere with the internal governments of a state: He has dissolved rep- resentative houses repeatedly, for opposing with main force his invasions on the rights of the people. He has combined with others to subject us to a juris- diction, foreign to our Constitu- tion and unknown to our laws. He has surpassed our own legislators and declar- ed himself invested with power to legislate for us."

Hutchinson wasn't talking about Hoff or U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. He was voicing remarks made by Benjamin Franklin and John Hancock and John Adams in 1776 at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Hutchinson asked his fellow members to vote against reapportionment, "If you believe as I believe that this reapportion- ment edict finds no basis in the Constitution in prior judicial decisions or in 1776 years of his- tory, then it is your duty and mine to refuse to obey it."

Though 163 lawmakers listen- ed — you could have heard a pin drop — they did not heed Hutchinson's words. Only 41 sup- ported him and voted against reapportionment. Among those were a slim majority of southern Vermont legislators, in- cluding Rep. Ira Whitney, R- Stanmore, who maintains "the courts do not have authority" — and thought it wrong to violate his call of office to uphold the state constitution. Rep. Floyd Skane, R-Hillisboro voted against reapportionment too, though he said he was not against the or- der. "I voted 'no' because people were against this plan, which puts us with two towns much longer and with no com- mon interests."

Said HOUSE MINORITY Whip Rep. George Kingston, D-North- field: "The debate has been very fair, clean and in line with good... Vermont tradition..."

Said Burlington's Democratic Rep. Richard Schmidt: "I will be replaced here by 15 representatives. In the future, whether you live on Pine Street in Burlington, Elm Street in Tunbridge or Main Street in Strafford, all citizens, all voters will have equal protection. The law will have all their due."

Said Rep. James Lounsbury, D-Pownal, "It is symbolic that freedom and Jesus Christ both died at 3-o'clock on a Friday af- ternoon..."

"The Judas and the 30 pieces of silver were present this Friday as they were over 1900 years ago," Hoff's face broke into big grins as the final vote was taken. He shook hands and thanked legisla- tors as they filed out of the big assembly room. But few legisla- tors smiled. Even the prey boys were subdued and silent. It was a day of serious action, results of which will be felt by genera- tions of Vermonters to come.

Legislators were aware of this. The debate was almost formal- quite eloquent and except for- fed for emotional taking, avoiding of emotional breakdown.