

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension

the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, it could do so in one week, even less. Why, I have seen bills introduced and go through all stages in one day. Do we need 18 months for dealing with a little difficulty like this? Certainly not. These problems are not big. They have been elaborated on by hon. members speaking in the second reading debate. Members have spoken about them in caucus, and have talked about them with others in the halls. We do not need 18 months to work out these concerns.

The only justification for Bill C-208 is that the government wishes to bring forward concrete proposals for cleaning up the three items of concern I have mentioned. These could be handled pretty expeditiously if the government really intended to act. The truth probably is, as we shall find out by the way my amendment is handled, that the government does not intend to do anything. It intends to suspend redistribution until 1975. It does not intend to solve the problems connected with the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. It intends to do nothing at all.

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): We will not let it do nothing.

Mr. Blenkarn: Hon. members opposite say they will not let it do nothing. The government has done nothing at all in lots of other areas of concern. It has done nothing about inflation and the high cost of living. They do not think the government will act on this problem, do they? The government does not intend to bring in representation by population. It does not intend to cure the provincial minimum representation problem, or to worry about the hiatus problem, and it certainly does not intend to get tough with the redistribution commission and say, "Look, obey section 13 of the act." If the government intended to act, it would not need 18 months. Surely by July 1, 1974 we could have proposals from this government, if the government really intends to intervene in this matter. We need not wait until 1975.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what the problems are. The commission has done a great deal of work. Hearings were held all over Canada. They had people prepare briefs and represent themselves at the hearings. They prepared maps in numerous quantities and sent them to members. Now they are told, "Stop work boys, stop the clock". This is a stop the clock bill. Why do we have to stop the clock until 1975? If there is a real interest in stopping the clock, stopping it until July 1974 is plenty long enough.

● (1600)

An hon. Member: There is no newspaper man up there.

Mr. Blenkarn: Those fellows do not pay any attention.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Order.

Mr. Blenkarn: They only talk to the press gallery. They have no intention of debating in this House.

We can be honest and develop some fairness. We do not have to thwart democracy. If we want, we can get at the problem of redistribution very quickly. The government will not do anything until July 1974. It has no intention of doing anything. However, if that commission gets into business in July, it can probably finish its work by the end

[Mr. Blenkarn.]

of October 1974. It takes six months to get organized in this country.

The people of this country do not like elections in December, January, February or March because it is too cold and hard to get around. If the commission finished its work in October 1974, we could have an election on new boundaries in the spring of 1975. However, if we pass this bill the way it is and do not get down to business until after January 1, 1975, we cannot have an election on new boundaries until 1976. That is a long time for this House to be denied representation by population.

We do not normally have elections in July or August. The weather is hot. It is no time to talk politics because the weather is hot and sticky. There is no reason to wait until January 1, 1975 other than the desire of this government to hold on. There is no requirement in the statute in terms of dates whereby the government must establish a committee within a certain time and that committee must report within a certain time. There are no time limits. It is like everything else. If something is required in 18 months, you do not have to start until 17 months have past.

I feel 12 months is long enough. I am told it is not quite 12 months but 12 months less 20 days. It is a full parliamentary year. If this Parliament cannot get down to business and solve the three small issues that have legitimately been raised in terms of redistribution, it is because this government is not interested, is not serious. The people of the growth areas of Canada must understand this government does not believe in representation by population.

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member who just spoke would be as interested as he claims to be in this particular matter, he would have taken the trouble last week to come to the committee hearings when this bill was being debated. He would have listened to the evidence and the testimony given by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) in the morning and the evidence submitted in the afternoon by the Chief Electoral Boundaries Commissioner, Mr. Nelson Castonguay, who explained at great length the complexity of this procedure. He did it so well and so extensively that all members of the committee who in the morning felt this matter could be resolved in a short time agreed with him that the time limit imposed by this bill was reasonable and that it was reasonable and wise to put it in those terms.

But the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn) prefers not to be confused by the facts. He stayed away from the committee hearings. He prefers to come in to the House and make irresponsible statements, such as he just made. He claims the government does not want to do anything. He has put forward a half-baked motion that is not based on any fact or knowledge of the complexity of this issue. If he does not want to be confused with the facts, he could at least give some indication as to what kind of formula he would produce in a short time. Perhaps that might have been a constructive contribution to this debate. He did not tell us what kind of compromise he would like to strike between geographical size and population.

Perhaps he could tell us what some of his colleagues in his party would like as a formula to resolve this dilemma whereby certain provinces will lose a number of seats as a