

*Electoral Boundaries*

amendments dealing with the resource industries go through the House of Commons. Both these bills continue to have priority and should be passed by December 31. Certainly that applies to the petroleum bill. I would remind hon. members that if we do not pass this bill by December 31 we will be in a position where the old electoral boundaries commissions will be re-established. We will operate on the basis of the previous allocation of seats as between provinces.

It would seem to me it would be impossible for the government and this House to bring down legislation to suspend the operations of those commissions again, simply because we allowed ourselves 18 months to come up with alternative proposals. Surely if there is no agreement on this proposal or on any other proposal it would strike me that the government would have no option but to permit the operation of the existing system. So I want to impress upon the members this problem we have in respect to time.

I commend the bill to hon. members not as the most perfect solution to the problem but as the most satisfactory one we have been able to find. When I say "we," I do not mean the government; I mean the members of this House of Commons taken in total. I want to emphasize that this is not a proposal the government has brought down, as in the case of the petroleum bill. It is a proposal that was widely discussed and debated in the House, and there have been opportunities for members to make their contributions.

**An hon. Member:** That is not true.

**Mr. Reid:** If members have not had an opportunity to make their contributions I suggest it is because they have not been paying attention.

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member would permit a question?

**Mr. Reid:** Yes.

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Would the hon. member who has just resumed his seat explain, with the urgency attached to this and other matters, why the government delayed so long convening this House after the election? That is blackmail.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer the general question because I am not a member of the government, but I can say in respect of the bringing down of this bill that the bill was brought down after consultation with the party leaders. The government was given certain assurances as to the time it would take in the House. The government was told there was no pressing urgency in bringing it down and making it the first order of business, but that there ought to be no problems.

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I wish to say that I do not want the impression to be left in the minds of any members in this House or anyone else interested in this debate that the concern for reasonable representation in parliament of Canadians rests solely on the government side of the House. If that

was the impression the parliamentary secretary was trying to leave with the House, then quite frankly I do not like it. It is certainly not in the spirit with which I intended to enter this debate.

Second, I do not like to be lectured by a parliamentary secretary, particularly this parliamentary secretary, with regard to understanding the importance of this piece of legislation. I do understand its importance. It is important not just to his constituents but to the constituents represented by all members of this House. The spirit with which we have entered this debate and continue with this debate is to find a basis, if we can, for proper representation of all Canadians, including Canadians in Kenora-Rainy River and in every part of this country.

I do not accept the suggestion that there was an understanding or agreement that there would not be discussion or debate in respect of this matter. The government House leader is here. Although I could be wrong in that regard, that was not my understanding. My understanding was that this matter would receive reasonable discussion. Perhaps all parties to the discussion in this regard are not here. Perhaps the best advocate the House has heard today with regard to having a full and complete committee discussion of this bill is the parliamentary secretary himself. He perhaps gave the best reason for the debate we ought to have on this bill, bearing in mind the time limit. I understand that if this bill is dealt with within a reasonable period of time there would be time to give it full and adequate consideration in the committee.

I wish to clear up another misapprehension the parliamentary secretary had. I refer to his reference to the Abbott Commission and the reference by the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) to that commission. The hon. member was not speaking along the lines the parliamentary secretary seemed to think. What he was saying was that the government, with our approval, had seen fit to appoint a commission of learned, experienced people both inside and outside the House headed by a great Canadian to examine at great length the physical facilities of the House of Commons, yet at the same time there seemed to be great haste in respect of the redistribution. The hon. member was saying that the matter was somewhat out of proportion, because surely the matter of redistribution is just as important as the question of further facilities for this House.

I realize there are others in this House who have paid greater attention than I have to the discussion in the early stages concerning the methods proposed by the government House leader. But my understanding is that with respect to the amalgam method there were only two committee meetings during which the matter was dealt with, and that is really of significant importance. I want to say to the government House leader—because this affects member from provinces that differ in terms of their needs and their wants—that we regard this bill as important. It is for that reason that I spoke to the government House leader earlier this afternoon, and I was pleased to have the discussion and the understanding that I did with him.

● (2140)

Dealing with the bill itself, the first thing that I want to say about it is that as a member of parliament, albeit not