

I am sure when this bill is presented and argued in the province which I represent the people of that province will be told that they are being given four new members. But we should remember that the present rules were to give them three new members. The amalgam formula as now interpreted adds only one. It should not be forgotten that the three new members would have been from a house of 264, whereas the one extra is from a house of 280. So we have gone backwards instead of forwards. One can read over and over again statistics about our population increase and realize that we are gaining faster than any province in this country; but when it comes to representation in this House we are losing out, and we lose out under the amalgam theory as well because we are counted as an intermediate province in this redistribution, proposed to follow the 1971 census. The 29 members we could have expected as a small province have been cut in half by the formula. As I have said, one seems to have been added along the way out of a total house of 280. I do not object to the rider—it is not in the bill—which I realize will give an additional seat to the Northwest Territories.

I listened, as I am sure did other hon. members, to the eloquent address by the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth). He described that vast constituency of his. Having a vast constituency of my own, I know how many times more vast his problems are in relation to mine. However, the additional seat adds to the total whether or not it is contained in the bill. I realize the bill really does not deal with the territories; they will be dealt with separately. By 1981, which date will be upon us soon, according to the formula laid down here we are supposed to become a large province. Let us have no sense of false pride in British Columbia, great and beautiful as it is.

There is nothing to be gained by playing games with the big people here, because the advantage in seats comes from adopting a low posture. We have many problems in terms of local geography and distance from this place. All members from British Columbia know what it means to spend days on a plane and at airports. They know what it means to have to wait to take off, not knowing whether or not a flight will arrive on schedule. Then there is the jet lag. I am sure the performance of our members of parliament is as brilliant as that of any group, and yet coming and going we are faced with the problem of jet lag. There are problems of representation which are distinct to a province on the Pacific coast, and I suppose also the province of Newfoundland, although it does not have the same rapidly increasing population.

By 1981 we are expected to be a large province, even though the percentage figure of the province would not give British Columbia one third of the population of the province of Ontario. I would hope at the committee stage in respect of this bill there will be an amendment whereby the population figure that is used in respect of a change from a medium to a large province would be at least four and one-half million, so that this change would not come until the intermediate province became at least half the size of the largest province, be it Ontario or Quebec, at the time when the changeover is made.

The other provinces grow, but we grow more quickly. I think that is an important factor to remember. When we look at the figures published in respect of the 1981 redis-

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tribution we note that, if it were worked out on the basis of a small province, we would qualify for 38 seats. If we were to be an intermediate province, we would qualify for 34 seats. Then if we look at the table that is set out before us we find that we are offered 32 seats. If we look back at the original discussion we find that we were offered 30 seats. There has been a slight increase in respect of the proposals placed before us this evening; however, the figure is two instead of four or eight. Considering all the problems of representation I do not feel that is an adequate number.

It should be remembered that the large provinces are on either side of this national capital of ours. They have the great advantage of being right here in the middle. The problems we face as members from the far corners of this country are very different from the problems faced by members in the two large provinces surrounding the area which comprises the national capital.

So for all these reasons I feel we must oppose the bill. If we do the arithmetic for 1981 under the new rule, we find that Quebec rises to plus 11, Ontario to plus 16, and British Columbia to plus 4. It would seem to me that the bill has been designed with the thought in mind that somehow it would be dangerous if the most rapidly growing province ever in any way caught up with representation in this House. Therefore I personally oppose the bill for this reason. I suspect it will be the reason some speakers from the rapidly growing province of Alberta will oppose the bill. There are a great many reasons, including the suggestion that parliament should not grow to an unwieldy figure in a very short of time, which provide this party with sufficient evidence to oppose the bill presented to us this evening.

**Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre):** Mr. Speaker, early in 1973 the electoral boundaries commissions for the various provinces reported to the House with their recommendations for the new distribution in accordance with the legislation which existed at that time. As a result of the 1971 census it was now time to redistribute the seats in the House of Commons. However the electoral boundaries commissions did less than a satisfactory job in the way they divided up the various provinces.

● (2030)

Certainly in the province of Alberta, with which I am most familiar, the redistribution job can only be termed lousy. For example, they have constituencies such as Lethbridge, which is mostly rural, with a population of 97,000 and constituencies such as Calgary North, totally urban, with a population of 77,000. Clearly it does not make sense from the point of view of fair play or in terms of making it easier for members to communicate with their constituents, or vice versa. In fact it only makes sense if you realize that the city constituencies are more likely to swing with national trends, and if you are a party in power not represented too well in a particular province it is in your interest to have more urban than rural seats.

There were things wrong with the redistribution reports of the electoral boundaries commissions for other provinces as well. The fact that these reports were made gave members an opportunity to raise long standing grievances about the method of allocating seats between provinces. In