

the mistakes that exist in the act." It should not propose an 18-month delay without explaining why the matter cannot be rectified in a shorter period. That is the question which ought to be answered before we are asked to deal with this amendment to the bill. In short, as we are dealing with something so fundamental to democracy as the actual representation of people in this House, we want to know why it will take so long to rectify whatever the errors may be. In short, let us get the answers.

● (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the hon. member for Davenport rising to ask a question?

Mr. Caccia: Yes, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Stevens: I would be pleased to entertain a question, especially if I can obtain an answer, too.

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member explain to the House why he could not attend the committee meetings and ask the very questions that he has asked now and obtain the answers he is seeking; and, if he did not attend the meetings, could he indicate whether he has read the transcript of those hearings?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to answer the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia). I am on three other standing committees. I have read the transcript to which he refers, and I still feel my questions have not been answered.

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege or point of order, as the case may be. The hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) has been suggesting that members on my side of the House do not pay attention to their committee responsibilities. May I say that both I and the hon. member for York Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) were tied up all day that day on another committee of this House. We have gone over the committee transcript. Indeed, we were surprised that the matter was pushed through committee so quickly. We would have attended, if that had been possible.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief and direct my attention to the amendment before us. We may consider one of three options. There is the 17-month hoist, the 11-month hoist and the zero-month hoist. I think the third is the most logical. A number of straightforward questions were asked of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), both in the second reading debate and in committee. The hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) referred on two occasions to members who have not been able to attend those committee meetings. I might say I attended part of one meeting. All members of the House must meet serious commitments, and it is most unfair to cast aspersions on any member for failing to attend committee meetings, especially as the transcript of the proceedings is available.

The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), as recorded at page 12 of the committee meeting held on July 12, 1973, said in part:

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension

The question I raise, really, is: why is it necessary to set the whole process of boundary redistribution in operation again with new commissions?

I have read the transcript of that committee hearing but have not found a satisfactory answer to that question.

We should ask the President of the Privy Council why it is impossible for a committee of this House to make recommendations for constitutional change and for solving the anomalies that obviously abound in the Canadian electoral system without the introduction of this hoist. Perhaps I misunderstand the issue. I would be happy for information on the subject. I do not see why we need the hoist and why we cannot allow the redistribution commission to make its report.

I suspect the reason is political. I suspect that the political water for some members is too chilly because the boundaries have changed, and therefore it is necessary to suggest a freeze, so to speak. Their best answer is jumping back a little bit, going backward. I suspect that this bill will be a backward step in terms of equity and justice, certainly for Ontario and British Columbia.

The hon. member's amendment reduces the hoist from 17 months to 11 months. I support the amendment, since half a loaf is better than no bread at all. However, it seems that those who oppose the bill will have trouble in getting their point of view accepted. I submit no proper answer has been given regarding the necessity of the hoist.

I am well aware of the need for delay after the commission reports in order to allow us to set up new electoral machinery. All the same, I am distressed because we cannot go through the business of constitutional correction and of introducing electoral fairness without, apparently, compounding injustices suffered by two areas of this country.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment proposed by the hon. member from Mississauga.

An hon. Member: Is it not Peel South?

Mr. McKinnon: I should have said Peel South, of course, Mississauga being a much larger and densely populated area that is generally referred to in that part of the country as being "out in the woods".

We are now considering an amendment to the bill; the bill, in turn, seeks to amend the act. One needs to think back ten years, to the time when the Parliament of the day thought that redistribution should be taken out of politics. It is interesting to see that many supporters of that movement now occupy the front benches opposite, and it is difficult to understand why they are now deserting the act that they so readily accepted in 1964. Editorial comments described the passing of the act as a milestone in our electoral reform.

Of course, the present government's outlook on political reform is that it is always reform in the future. It is like promising your small boy a car when he grows up. He grows up before you know it, and wants to know where his car is.

This act has now reached maturity and must be put into effect in the next election. But, as the hon. member for