

When the House of Commons returns on September 18, a parliamentary committee will listen to these representations, after which they will be referred, by October 17, to the Chief Electoral Officer. Then, the Elections Canada re-examination of the parliamentary committee's report must be completed by November 16.

These dates can vary by one or two days but, certainly, around November 21, if this calendar is followed, particularly if the House of Commons meets on September 18, a draft representation order will be proclaimed. Whatever the effect of representations made by MPs, those maps, as determined by the commissions on November 20, 21 or 22, will be confirmed. They are final.

We are only a few months away from the end of a process which, to date, has cost taxpayers nearly \$6 million dollars. That is not an insignificant figure considering the government's financial posture. Every penny counts. We are being asked to throw aside \$6 million, scrap a good process and replace it with one which is regressive and politically charged. It would cost another \$6 million and we would not have as much of a guarantee that the next election could be held on the boundaries determined by the 1991 census.

The current process would allow the boundaries based on the 1991 census to come into effect any time after November 1996, whereas the new process in Bill C-69, were it given Royal Assent tonight, would take 23 months to come into effect which would mean we would have to wait until June 1997. Think of that. Those are key months.

Yes, we do object to Bill C-69. Yes, we admit that the five points in Senator Beaudoin's report will occasion a delay in coming to a decision on Bill C-69. We welcome that because we know, as does the government, that time is on the side of a better process, the one which is in effect now.

• (1620)

Depending on what we decide today, by the time we come back in September, we may be less than two months away from the conclusion of the current process.

I cannot believe that a process which has not been seriously challenged, and where the individuals involved in its implementation have only been criticized because of the results of that implementation, which is perfectly natural, deserves to be scrapped at any time.

After every readjustment, there are complaints. That is completely natural. That is the only so-called flaw, if it can be called that. That is good. It means that the commissioners have done their jobs even though, as a result, some sitting members will be affected. Otherwise, if they want to satisfy members — which the proposed bill would allow, since they would control the commissions — then the readjustments would be just cosmetic.

I cannot believe that if we get to September without passing Bill C-69, the government would not come to its senses and say, "We cannot afford to scrap this. We have come this far, and we

will not pass a new bill and waste \$6 million, start the whole process again and delay the application of the 1991 census boundaries another seven or eight months."

What the government should have done is, first, accept our amendments, although we do not dispute their right not to accept them. At least they could say, "The current process is in place. It is nearly completed. It will be completed, hopefully, in November. Let Bill C-69 go into effect after that for the next revision." At least guarantee completion of the current process — which, again, I emphasize, is a good one.

We have not heard anywhere — either in the House of Commons or during the committee hearings over there, in our chamber or before our committee — any criticism of the process itself. We have never heard any criticism of any individual commissioners. We have only heard criticisms from members and candidates and political parties who feel that certain readjustments are detrimental to them. However, that is natural, that is normal, and that is healthy, because it means the commissions have done their job.

Honourable senators, the point of all this is that we reject the amendment of Senator Carstairs. We maintain that the report should be returned to the committee and that it take all the time needed to study the five points in it. When the committee comes back with its final report — whenever that might be — hopefully by that time, the government will have realized that E-3, the current act, is a good act and should run its course. If it wants to change the rules, do not change them in the middle of the game, change them for the next game.

**Hon. Richard J. Stanbury:** Honourable senators, I want to persuade you that it is important to Canada and to the Senate that this question be resolved now. Will we or will we not pass Bill C-69, the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, 1995, into law?

Senator Lynch-Staunton always makes an impressive, emotional speech. The only problem is that if he were to give effect to it, he should be sitting in the government seats in the House of Commons. These are all policy questions, which have already been determined in the House of Commons by the elected representatives of the people of Canada. It is normal for us to have important, and sometimes heated, debates about legislation that is before us. We must, however, always try to look at the subject dispassionately to see whether we can get agreement as to how best to serve the Canadian people.

To a certain point, we were dealing with this legislation on that kind of objective basis. When we dealt with Bill C-18, my colleagues opposite were concerned that the suspension of the redistribution process provided by Bill C-18 would result in the next election being held in constituencies the boundaries of which would not be based on the 1991 census figures. However, they did not propose that there be a new act.

The opposition made proposals for shortening time periods and asked that the proposed new legislation be completed as quickly as possible. They suggested that the new legislation be drafted, passed through the House of Commons and the Senate and become law by February, 1995.