

discovery of oil or gas on the east coast could easily bring half a million more people to Newfoundland or Nova Scotia than are anticipated in one census decade. Similarly, for some reason, Saskatchewan or Manitoba could achieve phenomenal growth. For instance, I believe it can be fairly said that we are headed for a great shakeup in the world economic system, and consequently in our own country. Indications are, for instance, that probably Alberta will grow faster in the next decade than any other province.

Similarly, an intermediate province will be based on the formula that will be determined by increasing its total number of seats by one seat for every two it would have received if it were of the same average constituency population as the small provinces with the largest average constituency population.

The application of the definition of an intermediate province being at any upper limit of 2.5 million would create considerable problems for British Columbia which, in the next census, is forecast will be in the large category. British Columbia then would be classified as a large province, yet compared to Ontario and Quebec, although classified as a large province, would be similar to the rabbit being classified as equal to a horse.

I suggest that this low level should be raised to some degree in order to give British Columbia greater status in that it is the province with its problems furthest away from Ottawa. I think we should look at this again and explore the possibilities of defining the upper limits of what the definition is in respect of an intermediate and a small province. One suggestion is that it should be at least two thirds the size of the largest province, or some similar figure.

● (1600)

I expect that this bill likely will be an interim bill that will be changed when the next census is considered. There is perhaps some value in having on the books a formula such as contained in the amalgam method to provide a basis for representation in the various provinces. I am sure that in 1981 and 1982 the parliament of Canada of that day almost certainly will want to alter the electoral boundaries and distribution of seats. I am disappointed that the government has not seen fit to introduce such a clause in this bill to make it mandatory for the parliament of 1981 or 1982 to consider actively what we are doing now.

The amalgam method of redistribution fundamentally alters the formula under which representation has been effected in the past. We cannot foresee what population trends and concentrations of population will occur in certain geographic areas. Our projections are always based on statistics. It has been aptly said there are good statistics, bad statistics, and plain lies.

There is considerable truth in the suggestion that we are always ready to criticize those who went before, but we often forget that it is difficult to predict the future. I am sure there is nothing more fallacious than basing projections on population statistics in relation to what went on previously. The drop in the Canadian birth rate alone will result in a very large difference in the population map in a decade from now. One does not even have to be a statistician to realize this simple fact.

### *Electoral Boundaries*

In the committee I certainly hope changes will be made in respect of this legislation to allow for the parliament of 1982 to have a look at this. I hope we will not have a situation similar to what we have at the present time whereby the map was drawn, parliament was largely unaware of what had happened, and when the map became available everyone was quite upset. Because of that situation it was necessary to go through the ritual of suspending the Electoral Boundaries Act and the commissions. This involved expense and delay in the setting up of new boundaries so that elections would be more fair.

I also think we should take a look at the definition of a province. We might consider the situation in respect of small, intermediate and large provinces, as well as the problem of British Columbia possibly being equated in the next census with a large province when perhaps it may have less than 30 per cent of the population of Ontario.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on balance we find Bill C-36 acceptable and we hope it will not take long for the House to refer it to the standing committee.

As the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) indicated, the subject of redistribution is one that has engaged the interest of the country and of members of parliament very intensely throughout the history of Canada. One might not think that, judging by the number of members in the chamber this afternoon, but perhaps there are reasons why some hon. members are not here.

I have had the privilege of being here through what will now be three phases of this operation. When I first came here redistribution was still based on 65 seats for Quebec, which we all learned in school. I was here when we switched to the method adopted in 1946, a method which at that time we thought was an improvement. Now we have reached the point where we are trying a new way altogether. I agree with the President of the Privy Council that this is a subject we must approach with as little partisan bias as we possibly can, and with as little provincial or regional bias as possible.

Yet at the same time it is a fact that in a country the size of Canada, with provinces varying in population all the way from the millions in Ontario to a few tens of thousands in the province of Prince Edward Island, it becomes very difficult to devise a formula that is equitable on all counts.

I have the feeling that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in the last parliament in its wrestling with this issue did come up with a pretty fair arrangement, which I think may stand the test of time even a little more than the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) feels is the case. I agree with him that in the 1980's there may be a disposition to make another change, but I would be prepared to predict that the change to be made in the 1980's will not be a change in the nature of the formula but rather a change in the total number of seats.

Without wanting to spend more than a few minutes on history I should like to point out that from 1867 until 1946 we had redistribution of seats based on the fact that 65 seats were assigned to the province of Quebec and all the other provinces were supposed to have a number in proportion thereto. As the President of the Privy Council