

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension

one. I do not understand that rationale. One has now been appointed, as I have said, to take care of this field. Consideration should be given to appointing one for all Canadians.

Redistribution must be effected in such a way that the needs of all parts of the country are fully recognized. Adequate representation for our areas of major population density must be assured, and the legitimate needs of rural Canadians for a voice in the councils of the nation must be heeded. As well, there are the claims of the community which must be acknowledged by a dedicated effort on the part of the member, who must assist the community to gain that which is of legitimate concern to it. He should obtain assistance from the national government. We must consider, as well, the needs of the various regions of this vast country. Some regions, although similar in some ways to others, are in other ways dissimilar and require attention.

We must take into account provincial needs that call for attention. In this respect, some provinces are far from adequately represented at present. We must recognize, and this concerns me, that passage of this measure will for a time perpetuate this inequity for perhaps five years. Of course, I am referring to my province of British Columbia. We appreciate the tremendous growth of the province. People are moving there from all parts of the country and, considering our salubrious climate and the beauties of nature in the province, one need not question why people go there. We like them to come. British Columbia is experiencing a tremendous population growth. Under the redistribution proposals we would gain three seats. We must remember that.

I have always maintained, as others have I am sure, that British Columbia is seriously underrepresented in the upper House of parliament. If one analyses representation in this country, one will see that some centres of low population are represented by many more senators than come from my part of the country. That is why I suggest that we are seriously underrepresented in the upper House of parliament, and it will be a disservice to British Columbia if we continue to be underrepresented in the House of Commons. That is why I think the amendment before the House will assist, at least to some degree, in meeting the situation as the time element is being somewhat reduced. On the other hand, I still feel that it would be of advantage to the province I represent if the original redistribution plan were to come into effect.

I realize that urban Canada faces problems, rural Canada faces problems and the provinces face problems, as do the various regions. Although we oppose changes which militate against the interests of any one segment or area, we say that we must guard against unnecessarily maintaining a situation which perpetrates injustices against other parts of this country.

The question has been asked, why has this delay been proposed? Why is the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, as reported from the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, to be suspended until the end of 1974? Last evening the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) commented upon the reasons for this suspension being introduced. If his pessimism is justified, we will wait an eternity until

[Mr. Patterson.]

changes are made. He suggested, in speaking of the problems that are inherent in this matter, that even if this bill were passed there would hardly be enough time to make the required changes.

What puzzles me is this: the government, apparently, has realized for a long time that injustices are being perpetrated in certain parts of Canada. The parliamentary secretary suggested that what was done in 1964 was not a final step, but one step forward in evolving a satisfactory answer to the whole problem. Since then apparently nothing has been done. Action has not been taken, plans have not been drafted and suggestions have not been announced by the government for bringing before parliament changes that would ensure that all parts of this country are properly represented in the House of Commons.

Now that the provinces which would suffer if there is a delay might be given some relief, this issue is being raised. We are told that we should not proceed until we have had a long time to discuss the matter and come up with answers. We are told that it will take time to bring forward solutions and to bring before parliament something that might be satisfactory. It seems that even if there were to be such lengthy consideration, any suggestion brought forward still would not satisfactorily meet the needs of the country. So I ask, why is there this long delay? We should get down to business and consider changes that would meet the needs of provinces which have gained tremendously in population without jeopardizing the rights of the less densely populated areas.

● (1620)

The changes in representation are necessary and desirable. I maintain they should be effected at the earliest possible time consistent with the need to ensure that they result in justice for all Canadians. I believe the amendment introduced by my colleague from Peel South is very worthy. If the government has been considering, looking at and working out the problems behind closed doors, surely it has something in mind to bring before this House. If we were to give the government a period of one year, I think this would be more than adequate. In the meantime, however, I object to the fact that my province of British Columbia will be denied proper representation until some time in the future when, hopefully, those needs will be taken care of. I believe this should be assured and provided for at the present time.

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, both yesterday and today I listened to the debate on Bill C-208 and the amendment. I recall the comment made by my hon. friend from Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn) in respect of the time being shortened to 12 months. As a new member of parliament, I am wondering what gave him the idea that parliament could move that fast based on past performance. I would certainly think the 18 months' period would be required.

As some members may know, I am of a very shy and retiring nature. I do not speak very often. I represent a rural area. Rural members sometimes speak parochially, and I suppose city members speak on the same basis. We must all look at this situation in terms of the country as a whole and even those of us from rural areas, probably in