

Some regions are important because of their natural resources, others because of identical or different outlooks; the commission must study all these factors in order to give varied populations equal and fair representation. If the commission truly wishes to get to the bottom of the problem—and it will have the time to do so—it will have everything to gain by meeting with the regional organizations and county councils in certain regions.

I believe, for example, that we must seriously consider and evaluate the advice that could be had from county councils; these still exist in our regions, since regionalization is being talked of more and more. Of course, in some ridings in which one city is more prosperous than another, municipalities are gradually uniting; this is often the result of planning by the provincial government. The commission should listen to the representatives of the provincial governments on the question of regionalization; it might thus submit far more satisfactory proposals than it has to date. I admit that the commission has done its best, but I have reason to believe that it limited itself to the demographic factor, and that is why I feel that it has everything to gain by considering other organizations and inviting them to discuss this possibility of regionalization of new or future electoral constituencies, which is, I believe, the original purpose of the government of giving the best representation possible.

Therefore, I believe that it is absolutely necessary to keep all the time needed for the study of this question. Therefore, the 18 months' delay does seem exaggerated to me, and I hope that it will be used by the commission but not only to freeze its work and allow the tabling of a nearly similar bill in 18 months. I hope, on the contrary, that sufficient research will have been done to ensure that the amendments wanted by some members will be adopted in due time, and that the new electoral constituencies will reflect perfectly the thoughts and desires of a population that always expects a better revamping of the electoral map.

Mr. Speaker, I want to limit myself to these few comments and repeat, once again, that I do not approve this amendment in the least, which is limited to one year, on the contrary, I hope that the government will take care that this commission will have the time required to evaluate all these criteria and to propose much more adequate, and much more practical solutions than the ones proposed until now.

● (1640)

[English]

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on the amendment before us with respect to Bill C-208 I would like to make it clear, first, that I believe the sponsor of Bill C-208 and the government owe this House an explanation why they feel that they cannot do whatever has to be done in their postponement bill within the one year suggested by the mover of this amendment. I think it is unforgivable that a situation that was known to exist since May of last year has been allowed to continue. There have been misgivings, and yet we find today that the government is not in a position to offer any concrete amendments to the present act or suggestions as to how certain of the problems that many hon. members in

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the House feel now exist with regard to the distribution of our seats in this country can be solved.

Let me be the first to say that in Canada we have a problem ensuring fair and equitable representation bearing in mind our large geographical areas and the continuing exodus from many of those areas to our urban centres. But I would also point out that we have had this problem since confederation, since 1867, and that it was dealt with very fully 10 years ago, in 1963, when, incidentally, the forerunner to this government first took office. They came to this House very bushy-tailed. If you read *Hansard* you will find that they made very gushing, grandiose statements as to how they would settle this problem once and for all. They decided that they were going to institute a new form of redistribution which, in their opinion, would save us from the problems with which we had been plagued since confederation.

In 1963 they were not successful in proceeding with the legislation, but they did bring in a bill which finally was passed in 1964. I would recommend that members of the House read *Hansard* for that period. If they did they would find that there were literally hundreds of pages of debate touching on the question of redistribution.

I remind the government, and in particular the leader of the government in this House because he was a very active participant in the debate which ensued in 1964, of the remarks made by the then minister of transport, Mr. Pickersgill, on behalf of the then prime minister of this country. I refer to *Hansard* of March 10, 1964 at page 739, where Mr. Pickersgill stated:

I would say there were two general principles that were accepted by the House. The first and by far the most important of these was that we should not follow the pattern that had been followed in the first 90 years since confederation—

Mr. Pickersgill, of course, was introducing at this point Bill C-72 the measure which we are now proposing to postpone. He continued:

—of having the readjustment of representation in this place done in this place by its members directly, but that it should be done by somebody which would be as impartial as we in our collective ingenuity could provide and who would be as competent as we could find means to provide through legislation and subsequent appointment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Will the hon. member allow the Chair to raise again the point of order that I raised previously with the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan). The speech on which he is embarking is really a speech which should be made on third reading rather than on the somewhat limited point that has been raised by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn). Perhaps, if the House is of the opinion that the debate on the point raised by the hon. member for Peel South is concluded, I could put the question and then hon. members would be much more free in what they could state by way of their contributions on this measure. Is it agreed that I put the question on the point raised by the hon. member for Peel South?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the point of order. May I state with all due respect that I feel my remarks are relevant, since I am in the position of not being sure