

hon. member for Villeneuve will also be accepted, then only will northwestern Quebec be adequately represented.

● (1600)

[English]

**Hon. Robert Stanbury (York-Scarborough):** Mr. Speaker, I am a city dweller, and too rarely in this House do we hear the point of view of urbanites expressed.

I think there is a great consciousness among Canadians wherever they live, that concessions must be made; that we must not insist absolutely on representation by population in a country as diverse and widespread as Canada. However, what has been said here today so far raises questions about the equity of our system of parliamentary representation, and about the trend represented by this bill and the one just referred to by the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette). That trend seems to be away from recognition that Canada is increasingly an urban society. Whether we like it or not, that is the Canada of today and of the future. While all of us want to make every concession for the preservation of a feeling of identity by all Canadians with their country and with their national government, we must surely take care that in making these concessions to alleviate the disparities in Canada we do not ignore the strains which can be placed on our society by increasing disparity of political representation in our national institutions.

In introducing this bill the minister said that it is based on principle, and I hope that my remarks will be taken as being similarly based on principle. The minister made reference to the populations of various provinces and argued very cogently that Ontario is not over-represented, from the standpoint of population, under the present distribution of seats in this parliament or the proposed one. But he did not make a comparison between the populations of southern Ontario and northern Ontario, as he might have done, and I think it would assist hon. members if the minister were able to show that his bill would not increase the disparity of per capita representation which already exists between the more densely populated part of Ontario and the less densely populated part.

The minister made reference to the distances involved. I want to remind hon. members that, in the modern society in which we live, density can be as serious a factor as distance in alienating the population from its institutions. As those of us who live in the great cities of Canada know, there is such a thing as high-rise isolation. We know that it is often difficult for people in a densely populated part of a large city to feel close to their elected representative and to communicate with him, and it is hard for their representative, in turn, to communicate with his constituents.

The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) mentioned that there are distances of 1,000 or 1,400 miles between some small communities and the minister referred to the huge land mass of northern Ontario. We all recognize that is true of northern Ontario, northern Quebec, and other parts of Canada. The present law recognizes the difficulties in transportation, communication, and representation in such large

### *Ontario Representation*

land masses. However, I want to remind hon. members that we represent not land, but people. We are not called upon here to speak for acres—or perhaps hectares, after the metric system is in force—we are called upon to speak for our constituents who are people, and I ask hon. members to remember the constant whittling away of the principle of representation by population which we have seen in this House in recent times.

The system of redistribution is already biased against urban areas. One only has to look at the riding which I have had the honour to represent since I was first elected in 1965. Between 1965 and 1968, when a redistribution occurred my riding had in it the largest number of people of any riding in Canada. Since 1968, after a redistribution of seats, my riding has continued to have the largest number of people in it. Even after the redistribution, which is to take place at the next general election, the three ridings which will be created mainly from my present riding will still be among the largest of Canada's federal constituencies.

● (1610)

Not only does the present formula militate against the people of my area receiving adequate representation by population, but the law has been interpreted by the Electoral Boundaries Commission in Ontario in such a way as to prevent it from taking into account any projection of population. Given even the fairest of formulas, even if you accept the formula now in the law, there will occur some distortion in the representation of urban dwellers in a rapidly growing area, because the projection of population between periodic redistributions is not taken into account.

I did not rise to oppose this bill. I would not argue strenuously against the present bill or the one the hon. member for Villeneuve proposed. I think I speak for my constituents, the people of Toronto at large and urban dwellers of Canada generally, when I say we are prepared to make any concession which will keep this country united and allow people to identify strongly with Canada and its national government.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stanbury:** However, we are an urban society and becoming increasingly urbanized. Not even urban dwellers are entirely in favour of this trend. Personally, I wish it were otherwise. But when we speak in this House of representation, we are surely not speaking of spaces, of cities, or of distances in this country. Surely we speak of the people we represent. We must be conscious of this country's realities.

City dwellers do not insist on perfect justice, but they ask members of the House, when considering changes to electoral law to remember that we represent people and nothing else. If we remember this and do this, we shall avoid arousing in city dwellers the sense of isolation which is evident, in a political sense, in some of those living in the far reaches of our country, and we shall preserve in all our citizens their sense of identification with Canada, which is an objective we surely all share.