

Redistribution

I know the house leader will agree with me that all the problems are not being raised by one party. They are being raised by members in all parties. He has only to talk to some of the members of his own party to understand the difficulties involved, because everybody in every province of Canada is concerned about the problem.

I think this is very important to our discussion. I am answering the house leader's remarks quickly now, but this could develop into somewhat of a contentious problem. If this matter could be worked out amicably then the problem probably could be solved much more easily. However, by doing it in this way before the business committee is set up and before there is a meeting of the house leaders, the government is saying in effect "We are going to serve notice that if the guillotine is needed to get on with this, we will use it".

On this side of the house we have taken a stand in respect of the redistribution act. We pointed out the difficulties which the members of the house leader's own party and the government now realize exist in that act. There are certain problems which will arise in this debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, following the remarks made this afternoon by the government house leader (Mr. McIlraith) to the effect that 33 petitions have been submitted to the house with regard to the readjustment of electoral boundaries as suggested by the various federal-provincial commissions, I wish to point out to the minister that 158 federal members of all political parties in the house have objected to the electoral boundaries proposed by those various federal-provincial commissions.

Mr. Speaker, there appears in my name on the order paper, under the heading of public bills, Bill No. C-143 entitled an act to repeal the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act which deals with the matter now under discussion.

Now, would the government house leader agree that Wednesday, for instance, we start by considering this bill, after obtaining the unanimous consent of the house, so as to determine what the federal members, Liberal, Conservative or others, want to decide or discuss in this connection?

[*Mr. Woolliams.*]

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the government house leader said there are 33 petitions, which means that 158 federal members are not at all satisfied about the new federal boundaries suggested by the federal-provincial commissions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Public Works to be clear and precise on that subject. We are not going to accept a motion limiting the debate and imposing closure on any member of the house. We want him to be precise and to give the house the opportunity to discuss freely the new electoral boundaries.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I must tell him as well as the other members of the house that it is out of order to start a debate at this time. There is no motion before the house. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. McIlraith) made this proposal in order to have the hon. members' arguments studied by the special committee. That is the minister's suggestion. We would therefore be making a mistake if we kept up a debate on the subject of redistribution when all we have is a simple suggestion made under standing order 15-A. I would ask hon. members who want to make representations along the lines of those just made by the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) and which undoubtedly deserve all possible consideration, to submit them to that committee for study, when it has been set up.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

In the same circumstances, should you not have called the Minister of Public Works to order? I do not think he had the authorization to deal with that matter the way he did a little earlier.

Mr. Speaker: I am under the impression that the minister wanted to explain why he wanted to make that proposal to the house. He did not have to make it. He did it as a matter of courtesy to the house.

Mr. Raymond Langlois (Mégantic): If the government house leader had made this proposition for consideration by the house, perhaps he did not have the right to do so. I believe, as you said, that he did so by courtesy. Now, if he was allowed to make this proposition, I think we have the right to say why we do not accept it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Suggestions which hon. members would like to make should be conveyed through their spokesman during the meeting of the committee in question.