

I was trying to suggest that we have policies, and have had them in this country for 100 years, which have debilitated the economic situation in the eastern and perhaps western parts. I was trying to suggest that there is no way we can consider a redistribution bill in the sense of having areas represented only by the number of people qualified on the basis of population. We must not only maintain but increase the power of representation in various regions of this country.

If the government was concerned about the direction of political feelings in the Atlantic region, and concerned about the people sending members back to support the government, we would get basic and fundamental changes in policy. But without that there is no way the government will change its position. If you carry the argument to its extreme and reduce the number of seats in the Atlantic region to that number based on Senate representation, we would lose the little bit of power we have now under the federal system. If we increased the seats in other parts of Canada on the basis of population we would accomplish essentially the same thing.

I would like to think that in the next few months the committee set up by this House of Commons will explore a number of avenues in respect of maintaining present representative power which the various regions have under our federal system. If this means that we have to increase the number of members in the House of Commons, I contend we must give equal consideration to regions such as the Atlantic provinces.

I should like to say something else that is perhaps supplementary to the views expressed by the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Rompkey). Newfoundland is a province of roughly 150,000 square miles. We have seven members representing that province in the House of Commons. We had seven members here in 1949 when Newfoundland had a population of just over 300,000. Under the proposed redistribution plan this representation would be reduced to six members, and we now have a population of approximately 532,000.

I should like to think that during our discussion of redistribution some consideration will be given to increasing the number of seats for the province of Newfoundland to eight. I should think there is ample precedent in the history of Canada for such an increase, and it might even be supported on a constitutional basis.

Consideration should be given to the suggestion that Labrador be considered as a single riding. It has a population of nearly 30,000 people and a land mass of more than 100,000 square miles. I am sure members of parliament will agree in view of the fact that Labrador is a resource frontier with a tremendous geographic area, that it should have that kind of representation.

The gist of the suggestion before us is that we have a delay of one year instead of the year and a half proposed by the government. I think a year and a half should be the minimum time, particularly when we consider the magnitude of this issue and all the factors I have tried to place on the record. That should be the minimum time, bearing in mind also the alienation existing in various parts of Canada as a result of the lack of responsiveness on the part of successive governments.

#### *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension*

This is an issue which has to be explored in detail. I hope when the committee is struck and given terms of reference it will travel throughout Canada to discover the feelings of the people of Mississauga, Yellowknife and other parts of the country. I am sure members of that committee will find that people in various parts of Canada feel basically the same as we do in Newfoundland.

During the five years I have been here I have come to the conclusion that the people in the cities have received excellent representation here in the House of Commons. I believe most hon. members are doing an adequate job, and I am sure the general public will not be impatient when we postpone this matter so as to give proper consideration to redistribution. This is long overdue. The subject requires consideration so that we will have a proper representative system for at least the next half a century.

I had a couple of other points in mind, but with your frequent interruptions, Mr. Speaker, I have become apprehensive so I will take my seat.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, just to make it clear, may I say we are debating an amendment put down by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blenkarn) in which he suggests one change to Bill C-208. As I understand it the amendment of the hon. member does not challenge the principle of the bill, namely that there should be a review of the current redistribution process. He merely proposes that the time limit for that review be 11 months rather than 17 months. I know he likes to say he is proposing 12 months rather than 18 months, but I am a little more forthright. After all, we are in the latter part of July, and July 1, 1974, is only 11 months away.

During the debate on second reading stage of this bill there were differing views by members of most, if not all, parties of this House, including my own, and it is quite possible that in respect of this amendment there may be a difference of opinion. Those who are opposed to the bill may feel it would be more acceptable if the time limit were reduced to 11 months, whereas those of us who favour the bill feel 17 months is not too much time to ask for its purposes to be carried out.

• (1630)

May I say that for my part, anyway, as a supporter of Bill C-208, that support is in no way a criticism of the principle we established in 1964 which called for independent commissions to draw the boundaries within the provinces. That principle must not be altered. It is also in no part a criticism of the job being done by the commissions of the various provinces, although I recognize that some members have voiced that kind of criticism.

The purpose of supporting Bill C-208, so far as I am concerned, and therefore my purpose in saying there should be 17 months if necessary to do the job, is in the first place to get over the uncertainty which exists at the moment concerning the boundaries on which another election would be held. In the second place it is to make it possible to take a look at the injustice which now obtains among certain provinces because there are established floors for some of the provinces but no floors for some of the others. The hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blen-