

a review by the next parliament we are prepared to pass this bill at third reading, hopefully this evening.

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a moment to emphasize my dissatisfaction with the bill as it has come back from the committee. I recognize the work done in the committee and I agree with my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), that the addition of one seat each for British Columbia and Alberta does repair an inequity in the bill. However, my basic objection to the bill is reinforced as the debate goes on. I oppose the bill on third reading because the precedent we are about to establish in enlarging the House of Commons after a census is, in my view, a very bad one. I recognize there will be a review in 1979 after the next census. Parliamentarians at that time will have to analyse the situation, but I wish we were not giving them this precedent to fall back on.

I have to ask myself whether the people of Canada will be better served by having more members of parliament, and in my opinion the answer has to be no. I cannot see how they will be better served. If there is any question regarding better service for the people of Canada, we would be far better to pay some attention to enlarging the facilities here for the present members of parliament. The offices, in too many cases, are cramped and the staffs are too small. The time available for members to do their research and prepare their material is far too short now because of the small staffs, and simply enlarging the House of Commons by having more members will not, to my mind, improve the quality of the performance of members. Enlarging the quantity does not necessarily improve the quality. The Canadian people have a right to the very best service we can give them, having regard to the extreme complexity of the matters that come before us.

I believe we could have served the people of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who are certainly affected because of their population situation, by amending the present act to give them a floor so that the number of representatives would not fall below the present level.

To add it all up, I want now to put on record my continued opposition to this bill. I hope that the people of Canada do not get the idea that every time we are faced with problems we will solve them by enlargement. There is already a psychology of government that when people face problems of an economic order we respond to them by creating new programs which add to the budget the Canadian people ultimately have to meet. This is a wrong philosophy and psychology: it creates dependency on government and it makes government far too big. I feel that somebody, somewhere, has to blow the whistle on this practice of enlarging everything in sight. I wish we could keep the House of Commons at its present size.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate at third reading very briefly. My main purpose is to indicate that in our party we welcome and approve of the two amendments made by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections when it considered Bill C-36. In doing that I must apologize to the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) for some faulty arithmetic on my part on Monday, December 2. I do that not because I am so anxious to be humble in offering

Electoral Boundaries

an apology, though I do not mind doing so when I make a mistake, but I do it also to emphasize a point.

● (2110)

The principles as laid down for Bill C-36 were very clear. There was to be one formula for the large provinces, a formula that was to be slightly better for the intermediate provinces, and a formula a little better still for the smaller provinces. When the hon. member for Calgary Centre said that the results for the intermediate provinces were no better than for the large ones, I felt he could not be right. Somehow or other the quick arithmetic that I did proved my point rather than his. But my arithmetic was wrong. Now it turns out that this is one of the points that has been corrected by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

I assume that it would break my commitment to be brief if I set out to describe the two formulas, the one that was before the committee and the one that is now in the bill. I am prepared to say that I understand the two formulas. At any rate, the result is that under the formula that is now in the bill the two provinces that are presently in the intermediate group, namely, Alberta and British Columbia, get a slightly better deal than Ontario and Quebec, and then the other six provinces get a deal that is still better. In terms of how you solve the problem of representation when you have some provinces that are very small in population and some that are very large, I think this arrangement makes pretty good sense. We are pleased that the committee was able to arrive at this compromise and we approve of the amendment.

I also welcome, on behalf of my party, the amendment that calls for an automatic review of the question of where we go from here. Some time after the next election—the date is fixed in the amendment but it would seem that we will be doing it in the thirty-first parliament—we shall review the plans for the future. In other words, we have blown the whistle on the automatic process of continuing to enlarge the size of the House. I think it was inevitable that that would be looked at again, anyway, in the next parliament, but it is good that we show our good sense by writing it into the bill that is now about to be passed.

There is just one other thing I would like to say, and it was one of the reasons I asked where the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) was when this bill was called. I am glad to see that he has come in. In his speech on second reading, as recorded at page 1847 of *Hansard*, he made a comment concerning the Northwest Territories. He said:

The bill does not contain provisions respecting the representation of the territories. In recognition of the very special factors affecting the adequacy of their representation, the government intends to introduce at an early date, after this bill has become law, a separate bill to increase to two the number of members to be elected from the Northwest Territories.

I would appreciate it very much, and so would my friend who represents that tremendous empire in the north, if the minister would reconfirm that intention now that the bill has come back from committee. He has given his word several times, both in and out of the House, and that should be good enough, but the figure that two or three speakers have used tonight about the number of members in the next House does not seem to include that. They are talking about an increase of 17. On top of our present 264,