

*Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension*

Look at the United States today where, without adequate city representation, they have not had adequate solutions.

There is, I believe, an element of self-interest versus national interest in some of the arguments presented to this House. We would do better, both urban and rural members, to think less of maintaining our present positions as individual members of parliament and to think more in terms of the best interests of Canada. I am well aware that the political life of urban members of parliament such as myself is, generally speaking, short. I believe our time is better spent in doing the best for Canada in what may be the one chance that we get, rather than thinking in terms of the next election.

It has been said that the name of the game of politics is to be elected. But if it is only to be a game it will not be a rewarding kind of life. So what, if our constituency and our political life be wiped out by boundary readjustments? These are relatively unimportant. If our lives are motivated only by political expediency, we will never have any profound satisfaction.

But we do have an opportunity now to follow through with the work of the boundary readjustment commissions, to give Canada more equitable representation and to help solve, with an increased number of members, some of the problems of the cities. So again, speaking on behalf of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Peel South, I plead that we get on with the work of enacting the new boundaries.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, we are now considering Bill C-208, An Act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, and the amendment moved by the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Blankarn), and I quote:

... by deleting the words "1st day of January, 1975" where they appear on lines 4, 8 and 9 at page 2 and by substituting therefor the words "1st day of July 1974".

Mr. Speaker, I am wondering exactly why such an amendment is moved; it is only a matter of six months more or less to reestablish fairly the electoral boundaries. Moreover, this matter has already been discussed just four or five years ago. The proposed readjustments of 1965 have been implemented in 1968, at the time of the election, and now we are considering whether this readjustment will take place on July 1, 1974 or January 1, 1975. If we are going to waste the time of the House, this is a good way to do so because it will change absolutely nothing and if we are given six additional months, it is clear that we will perhaps be able to study still more seriously the question of electoral boundaries.

● (1540)

Now, we all know that there will be no change for some provinces. For example, Prince Edward Island has four members and will continue to have the same representation regardless of the population. The constitution wants it that way.

In New Brunswick, the number of people is immaterial since they must have at least ten members whereas the other provinces have to play the game of alterations.

[Mr. Arrol.]

Quebec has lost some members since the last census and it will lose two other members according to the report of the commission.

Saskatchewan had a rather impressive number of members some years ago, but it will probably see its representation reduced to 11 or 12 members, whereas Alberta will keep its representation and British Columbia will add a few. Manitoba will not increase its representation very much. Ontario will probably have four additional seats.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that we stress the population of ridings almost exclusively and that virtually no comparison is made between rural and urban areas, as underlined in the suggestions included in the bill on new boundaries.

In my area, we now have three ridings: Abitibi, Villeneuve and Témiscamingue. According to the new bill, one riding will vanish—Villeneuve—and be added to the riding of Abitibi which will stretch as far as Ungava, the James Bay, the Hudson Bay and the Duparquet-Sennerre line. It will be an oversized riding, 800 miles long, reaching all the way to Ungava. By eliminating the constituency of Villeneuve, I am given back the municipalities I represented before 1965: Val-D'Or, Malartic, Louvicourt.

At present, the length of my constituency is 150 miles. According to the new boundaries, it will be 250 miles and nobody wants to understand that the time I spend covering these 250 miles, the member from Montreal can stay in his office receiving hundreds of electors of his constituency. In Montreal or Toronto, a square of houses makes a constituency while in northern Ontario constituencies, in Hearst, Kapuskasing or Cochrane, the member must spend his time travelling in his car to meet electors every two three miles. They just don't understand that in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, this is why time must be taken to study a suitable readjustment of the boundaries of electoral constituencies. The population factor is certainly important, but the geographical factor should also be taken into account, yet it is completely disregarded.

For example, Prince Edward Island with a population of 111,041 is represented by four members. What does that mean? If there is one member for 27,000 citizens, how many voters are there: 11,000, 12,000 or 13,000?

The province of New Brunswick has a population of 634,557 with 10 members, which gives 63,455 citizens per member.

In Quebec, where there is a population of 6,027,764 and 74 members, they want to eliminate two members. The number of people for each member will be increased, although there are already 79,865 citizens in each federal riding.

Mr. Speaker, I have more people in my riding than there are in the whole of a Prince Edward Island riding. By virtue of the British North America Act, Prince Edward Island is entitled to four members. The number of voters is irrelevant; what matters is the number of members of Parliament. As a matter of fact, there are four. The same goes for New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to be illogical we might as well be all the way. That is why people everywhere find the matter of representations funny.