

Estimates which could deal with it this month. May I commend that suggestion to the minister.

Mr. Drury: Madam Speaker, it was proposed first that this eminently sensible suggestion should be put forward by the government, but now that it has been made we will merely endorse it. We support the proposal for second reading of the bill and reference to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being four o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills, notices of motions, private bills.

● (1600)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

AMENDMENT RESPECTING RURAL CONSTITUENCIES

Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): moved that Bill C-370, to amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Reid moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, I would just like to explain the bill briefly to the House, and what is contained in it. It is a bill which deals with the problems that led us to suspend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

In many ridings in Canada there have been difficulties with the 25 per cent differential. Members have complained on many occasions, and properly so, that the 25 per cent differential has not been used according to the way in which we interpreted the act. It came out in hearings which the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections held that one of the reasons why the 25 per cent differential was not applied was because of the provision in paragraph 13(c) subsection (1) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. This subsection states that the 25 per cent differential, up or down, can be used as follows:

Electoral Boundaries

(1) special geographic considerations, including in particular the sparsity, density or relative rate of growth of population of various regions of the province, the accessibility of such regions or the size or shape thereof, appear to the commission to render such a departure necessary or desirable, or

The difficulty in the interpretation of that section has been that some commissions have interpreted it as meaning that, because the rate of growth is included, they cannot use any kind of differential at all, or the differential that they use is minimal. The consequence of this has been that in the projected last readjustment of electoral boundaries within the province it was discovered by many members that the size of the rural ridings was getting completely out of hand, and it was practically impossible for members to cover the area properly.

Consequently I brought in an amending provision which was put before the House and sent to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, which considered it along with three other bills, all of which had for their purpose the expansion of the percentage by which the commission had the power to vary the size of the various ridings.

The committee, after discussion, determined that the problem that they wished to have solved by this would be best solved by Bill C-370. As a consequence the other bills are still tabled in committee waiting to see what happens to the fate of this bill.

I recommend this bill to the House. It was unanimously accepted by the committee, and it stands before the House as a partial solution to problems that created so much difficulty for members in the previous House of Commons.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Speaker, I must confess that while I am in a very co-operative mood, I believe that something has gone wrong with regard to the movements of Bill C-370. As you can see by the number, this bill was introduced very late in the day. I think it was discussed just before Christmas, and not much attention was paid to it. It was then sent to the committee which came up with this recommendation. However, a third reading debate is very narrow.

I must say that a discussion of a point of view that is pretty well opposite to that taken by the committee becomes very difficult on third reading, if one wants to move into the wider subject as members were able to do in the committee. But there is no notice required with regard to the posting of an amendment.

I will advance the argument that I find that the rate of growth aspect in the demographic conditions to which the commissioners must pay attention is absolutely deadly insofar as the introduction of proper amendments of constituency boundaries, around cities with fast growing metropolitan areas, is concerned.

First of all I will say that if an appropriate notice had been received and one could have posted an amendment to the committee report, or to the bill as it comes back, there could have been a debate at report stage. But we were precluded from doing that simply because it was only this afternoon that it was negotiated that Bill C-370 would come forward. I suggest that if this is going to be the case at least a 48 hours' notice of the taking up in debate of a report, or of a bill of a private nature, be given, particular-