

The people who drafted this act in 1964 must have made a great deal of effort as well as had a great deal of tolerance to come forward with an act as fair as this. I have read the 1964 debates. I was impressed with the statesmanship of those who wrote that act and managed to get it through the House. It was impressive indeed. It hurts my sense of efficiency to think we are going to throw it away and start over again. We will probably end up with something not very much different.

I do not see how we can possibly bring forward a new Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act that will be any more fair than the present one. The present one went wrong because some of the interpretation of it by the commissioners was faulty. Instead of giving 25 per cent to the rural districts in Manitoba, they looked ahead 100 years and gave the additional seats to the urban areas in the expectation these cities would grow at some later time.

● (1720)

In Alberta, the commissioners seemed to think the country had been running east and west for long enough, and that now it should run north and south, and they drew up the constituencies accordingly. There was little complaint from British Columbia. I have not heard any member come to me complaining bitterly about his riding, about having people cut off from the main centre of the riding. I would suspect that the hon. member from Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) got jugged about as badly as anybody, but he is going to accept the position. The north end of Vancouver Island ends by being half of a constituency, which will present difficulties. But the overriding factor is that British Columbia was to get a fair break for the first time, which was enough to encourage us to accept these smaller problems.

To sum up, I feel we are doing a great injustice to British Columbia and, to a lesser percentage, to Ontario. Not only are we doing an injustice but it is apparent to everybody in this country that we are doing so. When other controversial issues are discussed in this House, such is the Xerox age in which we live that people continually pass around editorials to reinforce their views. There may be dissenting points of view in Burk's Falls, but I have not heard the hon. member from Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) refer to any editorial from there which is in favour of the postponement of redistribution. Editorial comment throughout Canada, as far as I can see, has been in favour of allowing the act to go forward. Boundaries should be readjusted in accordance with the 1964 act. I feel they should be readjusted.

In conclusion, I suspect, judging from the general feeling in the House, that our amendment is not likely to be successful. No doubt the same people who will vote against the amendment will vote for the bill. In doing so I feel they are committing an offence against democracy and against the country, one which will be long remembered. I advise them not to do this. Hon. members worked hard ten years ago to bring forward an act which seemed fair to almost all Canadians and now we are throwing it away because we are afraid to carry it to the final stages.

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Marie Boisvert (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion the mover of this amendment feels it is quite urgent to have the province of Quebec lose two members.

We are opposed to the current election map not so much because it includes redistribution as the fact that some constituencies are eliminated, mainly in Quebec, and because the date is January 1, 1975. I do not think this date should be maintained because if an election took place between July 1, 1974 and January 1, 1975, we would certainly be more willing to keep 74 members rather than 72 as proposed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Of course, it is not that I do not welcome the citizens from parishes added to my constituency; it is not that I regret the fact that I lose some of them but only that I am concerned about the number of voters. It is said that the province of Quebec is not like the others; therefore, because of those specific problems, the government is not justified in provoking it by reducing its representation.

The first thing we noted when going through the committee report is precisely the fact that it advocates fewer members for Quebec whereas its population has been increasing for the last ten years even though not at the same rate as in other provinces. If its population has increased in spite of the meager services we are allowed by the government to provide in our ridings it is not by expanding the ridings that we shall be able to give better services to the people we represent.

Once this bill is adopted so that the same boundaries will be used until January 1975, I hope they will introduce another legislation which will permit to believe that the number of Quebec members will not be decreased or, if need be, that a new similar bill be presented in order to preserve at least the status quo. If the number of members cannot be increased, then let the status quo be maintained and let the reducing be stopped.

It is evident that certain political parties which enjoy less popularity in Quebec will rejoice at the reduction of seats in certain areas and their increase elsewhere. But, it is here more a matter of equity towards the people of Quebec who, after all, are part of the Canadian people. There must be justice for everyone and not only for some areas of this country.

With this, Mr. Speaker, I will leave the floor to another member, while wishing that the status quo be maintained at least until 1975, if it is impossible to do better. And if in 1975, no decision has been taken or no more serious results obtained from the inquiry committee, another bill should be presented and the status quo maintained for many years, or else there will be much protest in Quebec, which would certainly be justified because they would be rising against what I consider an injustice.

[*English*]

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, my remarks this afternoon will be brief. I spoke on second reading and at that time supported this legislation. I still do. As for the motion before us this afternoon, I believe we need the full 18 months to review the situation, and I cannot support it.

My main reason for speaking this afternoon is this. There seems to be some misunderstanding among some