

which means that some 3,500 people would not have been declared during this census, and therefore we would have about 182,526 people to represent in northwestern Quebec.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had a population of 171,831 in 1971. If you divide this number by three, you get exactly 57,265 people to be represented by three members. If you add those who were not included in the 1971 census and who are still there today, it amounts to between 7,000 and 10,000 people more. And if you refer to the end of this Parliament's mandate we will have a population of 15,000 for James Bay alone. I believe those people, even though they were not accounted for in the 1971 census, are also entitled to be represented by a member of parliament who is efficient in the House of Commons. Of course, the new electoral redistribution does not satisfy them, but I know with some goodwill—and at least several members have demonstrated theirs this afternoon—the government will adopt Bill C-421 to give a new riding to northwestern Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I could also be mean to the government, but this is not my intention. We could have mentioned ridings like Matane, which has 63,000 people, Mercier which covers about one square mile and has 67,000 people, Lac-Saint-Jean, represented by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard), with a population of 67,200, Gaspé, with 60,481 people, and ourselves, according to the 1971 statistics, as I said earlier, we have 57,265 people for three members of parliament, or three ridings in northwestern Quebec. Now, Mr. Speaker, what more do we need? If we want to give some representation to James Bay, as I said earlier, we even have enough people to have three ridings.

● (1650)

But if we compare with 1971, there are about 2,500 to 3,000 fewer people in each constituency. Earlier, I heard the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) say how long a letter can take to go from the far end of the future Abitibi riding to Ottawa to make representations to the government for a new constituency. For my part, last winter, I went to James Bay and, unfortunately, I had to remain two days more than I had planned because of a storm, since the planes could not take off. As the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) said, I would like to give more to other areas because some have very large populations and I would like us to pass a measure in order to help these people who represent large populations and must travel great distances from one end of large ridings to another.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague who now represents the Abitibi riding also has one of the largest constituencies in the country. It may not be the largest, but it is one of the largest in the country. His riding nearly reaches up to the North Pole. This member has done fantastic work to represent his constituents, but if this same man also had to represent in addition to his own riding part of mine, that is Val d'Or, Lebel-sur Quévillon, Senneterre and Chibougamau, he would have to travel even more than at the present time since his home is even further than mine. In conclusion, I want to say that I have great

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confidence in the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras), who wants to give fair representation to northern Ontario. He will certainly do everything he can, as said the hon. member for Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata (Mr. Gendron), to try to negotiate with all the other House leaders, so that he and his constituents can be well represented and also that north western Quebec can be fairly represented in the House of Commons.

Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to what has already been said concerning the representation suggested in this bill. I believe that the whole problem now caused by these redistributions came about when Parliament decided that it would no longer be responsible for the redistribution of electoral boundaries and handed over the work it had always done to a commission. Since then, and especially in the last ten years, we have suffered somewhat from the sickness of bureaucracy.

I do not know whether this is because we are lazy and do not want to take on extra work or because we do not wish to accept responsibility for our many mistakes, and this legislation is a mistake. But if we keep going this way, we will soon realize that we are referring to committees important parts of our work which, as members of Parliament, we should feel responsible for. As I said on other occasions, we are creating a politically irresponsible government, because those who do our work are not responsible to the people, they have not been elected by them to do that work. This does not mean by any stretch of imagination that those people are not competent. All I say is that we are entrusting them with powers and an authority that we should be exercising right here in this Parliament.

When the government set up that commission, they should have at least retained some control, and this is the objection I have to that commission. At least the government should have allowed members of parliament to make representations to the commissioners. I myself had problems with them, but I was told there was no way, I was 10 days late. Can you imagine that, when a member of parliament comes to discuss serious problems in his area, when subdivisions are made contrary to the constituency interests. It is an easy matter for a technician to sit down at his desk, pick up a map, draw a line here, another there, and so on, and the hell with the rest! But there is something more to it. The economic structure, the economic nerve center in each riding must be considered. With the last subdivision hon. members will have to cover constituencies whose nerve center is in another riding. This is beyond the imagination. Who could have thought this would ever happen?

A constituency with all unemployment insurance offices and other agencies, in someone else's area, this is what I have been given without regard for my constituents needs. An area which I used to cover, was thrown into another riding, but the people still go on dealing in my own constituency. So I have to serve them just the same, because I will not force them to drive 50 or 75 miles to the constituency where they were put by the commissioners. This is not their fault, so I serve more than 10 or 12 communities outside my own area. What else can we do