

The Bill has no guarantee that after the 1991 census or after the 2001 census, we will have the kind of federal representation which we would like to see. There are, of course, other problems with the Bill, problems which we would like to point out now. Even after the Bill passes, we will be making those points with the boundary commissions that will be established in each of the provinces.

I think that all across Canada, we accept the idea that representation by population, although a basic concept, cannot be the only basis of representation in a federal state. We realize that in order to have federal representation, we must recognize the regions and establish equal representation from all areas of the country. You being a westerner yourself, Mr. Speaker, would know that we in the West often hear that by the time the electorate in Ontario and Quebec has voted, it is no use to vote in Alberta. In every election, westerners feel that the decision has been made in Ontario and Quebec and that the West does not count. You and I know, Mr. Speaker, that it does count. However, that very feeling is the source of the separatist movement which continues to crop up every once in a while in the West. That feeling of isolation always exists and we should deal with it more thoroughly than we have in this particular Bill.

We do not always adhere to the basic principle of representation by population, but we do not have in place a formula which recognizes the regional structure of the country. Perhaps that is what we should do. Perhaps we should say that the Atlantic provinces, British Columbia and the prairie provinces should have the same number of representatives as Ontario. Perhaps there should be a certain number of balanced regions so that no two regions could together hold the balance of power in this House.

There are many people who suggest that a logical solution to the representation problem would be to divide Canada into five regions and give each region the same number of representatives in Parliament regardless of population. The argument for that is based on the fact that quite often, the homogeneous structure of a large city allows a Member to represent it as well even if he represents twice as many people as a Member from a much larger area in another part of the country. I will not spend much more time on this topic. I just wanted to place on the record the concerns of many westerners with respect to the process of representation.

● (1140)

In the discussions which have been held with respect to this Bill, and the debate which has taken place in the House of Commons, I think that almost every problem with respect to representation has been brought forward. I refer specifically to the problem of representing a very small area and the problem of representing a very large area. For instance, the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) spoke about the amount of travel which is necessary for him to undertake in order to reach every part of his constituency. The same applies to Saskatchewan where, for example, the Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake (Mr. Gormley) cannot visit

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anywhere close to his entire constituency when he goes home for the weekend. His riding covers approximately one-quarter of the province of Saskatchewan. This is the type of representation which possibly needs fewer people but more resources in order to allow a Member to be a good representative of such an area.

We have heard arguments that it is almost as difficult to represent a heterogeneous riding in Toronto as it is to represent a riding in northern Saskatchewan. Anyone who holds that view would have to travel to northern Saskatchewan in order to recognize that it is a difficult job to represent such an area. In the riding of The Battlefords-Meadow Lake there are probably three or four language groups. There is Chippewyan, Cree, English and some French, which is spoken by preference. It is not an easy job to be the representative of all these places. As Hon. Members may know, the new boundaries in Saskatchewan give more than half of the province to one constituency. That happens to be the constituency of Prince Albert. Although I know the area very well, I also know it will be a difficult job for one Member of Parliament to try to represent more than half of the province of Saskatchewan.

There have also been arguments with respect to developing regional representation through the reform of the Senate. It is my Party's policy that the Senate be abolished. That is the basic Party position. However, arguments have been presented in the House, and other places, which suggest that we could possibly stay with representation by population but that the regional representation could be established in the Senate. I do not think that this is necessarily the best way to solve the western or the Maritimes isolation problems, although it is one idea which could perhaps be thrown into the hopper in the future when we discuss the best representation procedures to be adopted.

In conclusion, if this Bill were to be sent back to committee, the opportunity would be presented to establish a long-term formula which would recognize regional requirements. Perhaps a basically different method of representation by region could be considered. In that way, we might come up with the type of representation by the year 2001 which would satisfy these areas of the country which now feel isolated because of their lack of population.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake (Mr. Gormley).

Mr. Gormley: Mr. Speaker, I wish to address the comments made by the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo). I also wish to thank him for his reference in his remarks to my constituency. I can confirm what the Hon. Member has said with respect to my riding covering one-quarter of the Province of Saskatchewan, which is a riding in excess of 175,000 square kilometres. There are certainly some real logistical and practical problems with respect to representing such a large area. I wish to find out what the Hon. Member thinks about striking a balance between Members who represent large ridings, not so much by making additional ridings but by restructuring the