

In any event, if the leader wishes to quote other individuals in order to justify her position, perhaps she could quote Warren Allmand explaining to us how it is that the policy of the Liberal government today is contrary to the principles of the Liberal Party. However, I will let that one go by.

Let us not quote the words of others simply because we do not have arguments of our own. Let us look at Bill C-69, which the Leader of the Government in the Senate has identified as a high priority to the Government of Canada and to members of the House of Commons. There has been no reference to the high priority of this bill to the people of Canada. Nothing has been said about the fact that this bill is in the public interest.

Not only is this bill in the interests of the members of the House of Commons, particularly most of the leader's colleagues from Ontario, but it was even written by members of the House of Commons. Those who have the most vested interest in the electoral process were called on to be the authors of a new electoral boundaries readjustment act. That is gerrymandering. This is what the original act, passed into law 30 years ago, was designed to counteract. It was to stop the government and its supporters from determining electoral boundaries.

Not only is the new Bill C-69 authored by members of the majority in the house, it is with the conspiracy — or, if that is too strong a word, with the “cooperation” — of at least one opposition party, depending upon which feature of the bill we examine. The most heinous part of the bill is that it also compromises the Speaker of the House of Commons. It makes him part of the conspiracy.

Under the present act the Speaker, on his own, can name two of the three members of each of the provincial boundaries commission. The new bill, Bill C-69, says that, after consultation, the Speaker will name two of the three. After consultation with whom? Obviously with members of the government.

Under the present act, which has now gone back into effect since June 22, the political input of members of the house arises at the end of the process. Under Bill C-69, the political input starts at the beginning of the process because the Speaker of the house is instructed that, after consultation, he will then name two of the three members. The third member is named by the chief justice of the province, and that person becomes the chairman of the commission.

Under Bill C-69, if 20 members of the House of Commons disagree with the choice, they can rise within a certain period in the House of Commons and challenge the Speaker's decision. The ultimate authority of Parliament, the Speaker of the House of Commons, whose decisions on any procedural matter cannot be

challenged, is being told that in the Electoral Boundaries Act, as suggested under Bill C-69, “Sir, you are part of cooperating with us to make sure that the majority members on each boundary commission sympathize with our objectives.”

Can we envision 20 members in the House of Commons getting up and saying, “Sir, we disagree with those two members or that one member that you named in that province because their approach to electoral boundaries does not identify with ours”? The Speaker of the House of Commons could have a decision of importance overruled. What would be his choice? He would have to resign. He would have no other choice. Under Bill C-69, you are asking us to put the Speaker of the House of Commons in that dreadfully impossible position. We will not be party to that.

• (1520)

We will not get to Bill C-69 because the evidence is overwhelming that this bill has lapsed. The deadline has gone by. The whole debate since Bill C-18 was introduced has been on establishing a deadline. Minister Gray said, “I need two years, but maybe I can bring a new bill within two years,” accepting that he had two years to do so.

We suggested the date of February 1995. The government, as Senator Murray pointed out, said, “That is a bit difficult. We will pledge ourselves to try to bring something in before June 22, 1995, otherwise we will be in the situation we are in today.”

Bill C-18 is still alive. Bill C-69 has gone by the boards. In any event, I hope we will have expert, independent advice. That of the government, of course, has already been given to us by Senator Fairbairn. I am sure Senator Beaudoin will bring in expert advice that, I have no doubt, will save us the embarrassment of having to pass such a heinous bill as Bill C-69, which is self-serving and of no value to the Canadian public.

**Hon. Sharon Carstairs:** Honourable senators, is it not amazing that we can debate with such obvious passion a bill that the opposition argues is dead? The bill will go to committee. The committee will debate it. When the committee debates whether this bill is alive or dead, I would ask committee members to remember the following remarks made by Senator Murray on Tuesday, June 14, 1994, when he said:

Finally, honourable senators, I just want to say this: I think that on a matter of this kind, the elections law and redistribution process, the government should seek the broadest possible consensus among the political parties in the House of Commons. I believe that, for our part, we senators should look favourably upon any bill that enjoys that kind of consensus.