

*Ontario Representation*

President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) introduced legislation relating to electoral boundaries instead of the President of the Privy Council within whose administrative responsibility this matter lies. In fact, this proposition is well founded. However, I am not able, in examining the precedents or rules of the House, to find any prohibition against this practice. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre I think understood that in raising his point and introduced a caveat that may be used in some argument with respect to some other administrative restrictions in the future.

● (1530)

That seems to be the extent of it to this point. However, I did want to give note to the point of order which gave us some cause for study, but I can find no basis on which to interrupt this practice at the present time.

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, parliament is probably at its best when it moves to act to redress a grievance. That grievance must, of course, be one of significance, and the issue on which it is based must be one of principle and not of expediency.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** You are gerrymandering.

**Mr. Andras:** I am very interested to see the reaction of the New Democratic Party to the comments I am making on this very significant bill for northern Ontario. I want to make clear that the reason I believe this is based on principle is this—the purpose is to allow the region of northern Ontario to retain in this House the same level of representation which it has. More than three quarters of a million citizens in northern Ontario, which has a population roughly equivalent to the province of Saskatchewan, feel aggrieved because of the effect upon this region—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Bellechasse on a point of order.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I would not want the minister to think that I want to interfere with what he is saying, on the contrary. The matter is that interpretation is not working very well. I wish I could hear what the minister is saying with regard to Bill C-60. If we are to understand what he is saying, we need interpretation, at least as far as I am concerned. That is my point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair will check the situation, with the hope that it might be improved. Meanwhile, if the hon. member has any problem, he might perhaps sit in the next seat. In the meantime, we will see that the situation is set right.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** We all have the same problem.

[*English*]

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, I will also be most interested in the reactions of the Progressive Conservative party. The people of northern Ontario will have been observing with very great interest whether there is an intent to support this grievance which is felt very strongly in that region because of the effect of the decision of the Electoral Boundaries Commission of Ontario on the number of seats.

Northern Ontario is a vast region representing about 80 per cent of the land mass of the province of Ontario, and in that sense it is now having, by that decision, its level of representation reduced by one seat at a time when the House of Commons is about to be enlarged in its membership, and also at a time when the region feels it has not lost population but has increased it.

**Mr. Stevens:** Sit down, Bob, and we will pass it.

**Mr. Andras:** I would if I thought that would be the case, but I do want to share the reasons for our argument. I think I know one or two members of this House who, over the last few years, have thought about this, but if the region had been a province this could not have happened. In fact the region would have had more members, not fewer, in the next parliament.

We do find ourselves in an anomalous situation, Mr. Speaker. The Chair, in a sound and reasoned judgment in April, 1977, stated that it had no jurisdiction to deal with the legal issue raised by the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner) and supported by other members regarding the validity of the report of the commission in Ontario. Subsequently the Federal Court, trial division, and the Federal Court of Appeal, for different reasons, stated that they had no jurisdiction to upset the report of the commission. The Federal Court Act states that no provincial court would have jurisdiction to deal with this issue. Therefore we are left with an act of parliament, The Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, duly passed by parliament and proclaimed, over which no one seemingly has any jurisdiction.

**Mr. Stevens:** You are chewing up time, Bob. Let us pass it.

**Mr. Andras:** In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this House, the highest court of the land, particularly as it relates to legislation by which members come to the House, must not only have jurisdiction but must also enforce it when justly called upon to do so. But it is not only this anomalous situation or the need to meet the just demands of the citizens of northern Ontario that have led the government to assume the responsibility for redressing this grievance.

**Mr. Stevens:** Don't talk out your own bill, Bob. We are winning, so sit down.

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be party to information which I do not have, but I really do not think he is. As strong, perhaps as overwhelming, as those reasons are for doing so, the comments contained in the minority report of