

THE SENATE

Thursday, July 3, 1952

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

REPRESENTATION BILL

FIRST READING

A message was received from the House of Commons with Bill 393, an Act to readjust the Representation in the House of Commons.

The bill was read the first time.

SECOND READING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

Hon. A. K. Hugessen: With leave of the Senate, I move the second reading now.

This bill, honourable senators, was finally passed by the House of Commons at one o'clock today, and under the circumstances it has been impossible this evening to distribute it in its final form to members of this house. I am advised however that on the Table there are sufficient copies available for any honourable senators who wish to examine the bill, and that these copies are in the form in which the bill was passed in the other place, including the changes which were effected in the course of its passage through that house, and the correction of a few minor typographical errors.

This bill, concerning as it does representation in the House of Commons, is perhaps more of a subject for debate in that house than in this chamber; and indeed, as honourable senators are aware, it has been debated very continuously in that house for the last four or five days. Of course from a technical point of view this chamber is at liberty to suggest such changes in the bill as it may see fit. I might say, however, that the bill as it is before us carries out the provisions of section 51 of the British North America Act as that Act was amended earlier in the session. That section requires the Parliament of Canada, after each decennial census, to readjust the representation of members in the House of Commons in accordance with the population, and it lays down the rules by which that readjustment is to be accomplished.

The census figures taken for the year 1951 have made it necessary that some provinces shall lose seats and other provinces shall gain seats. Thus, by the bill now before

us, Nova Scotia loses one seat, Quebec gains two, Ontario gains two, Manitoba loses two, and British Columbia gains four. The representation of the other provinces, except Saskatchewan, remains unchanged. Under normal conditions Saskatchewan would lose five seats; but as honourable senators will recall, the amendment of the British North America Act which received the approval of this house some fortnight ago provided that in any decennial redistribution no province shall lose more than 15 per cent of its representation for the previous ten years.

Hon. Mr. King: That is an amendment of the present Act?

Hon. Mr. Hugessen: It was an amendment of the British North America Act which was put through parliament about a fortnight ago. If the census figures were strictly adhered to, the province of Saskatchewan would lose one-quarter of its representation—five seats—but under this amendment it will lose only three seats. In other words, its representation will be reduced from twenty to seventeen.

The amendment to the British North America Act to which I referred also provides that the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, which up to now have been represented by one member, shall be represented separately. Provision is made, therefore, for an additional seat in the House of Commons. Under the bill now before us that house will have 265 seats hereafter as compared with 262 at the present time.

The schedule to the bill sets out in detail the names of the various constituencies in the different provinces, and their geographical boundaries.

I would hope, honourable senators, that this measure will pass through this house more or less as a matter of form, in the traditional way in which in the past we have dealt with measures of this kind coming to us from the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. R. B. Horner: Honourable senators, I have only a few remarks to make on this occasion. The house will recall that some time around March of this year I voiced the hope that Saskatchewan would not be dealt with strictly on a population basis when this matter of redistribution came up. I was hopeful that the reduction in the number of seats for Saskatchewan would not be too drastic, and I agreed with those who held that Saskatchewan should not lose seats in the House of Commons because of too strict an adherence to the rule of representation by population. I must say that I am very