

only to think of the situation of Prince Edward Island to see how far Parliament has been prepared to go to recognize the principle that better than average treatment is needed by the smaller provinces.

Under the 1974 law, the size of the House of Commons would have increased from 282 members—its present size—to 310 members. British Columbia would have gone up from 28 members to 33 members. Alberta, another growing province, would have gone up from 21 members to 27 members. Saskatchewan, a small province, would have had 14 members, as it now has. Manitoba would have increased from 14 members to 15 members. Ontario would have gone up from 95 members to 105 members. Quebec would have gone up from 75 members to 79 members. New Brunswick would have remained as it now is with 10. Prince Edward Island would have remained where it now is, with 4 members. Nova Scotia would have gained a member; its representation would have increased from 11 members to 12 members. And Newfoundland would have increased from 7 members to 8 members.

What we see in this bill is that it will provide no increase for any small province in the foreseeable future. There are to be new seats—additional seats. But the government is following the rule that “to him who hath shall be given,” and in the redistribution based on the census of 1981, the new seats after 1991, and those after 2001, on the basis of the demographic projections, are all to go to the larger provinces with the exception of Quebec. Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia—the growing provinces—are to get seats. That is fair enough. The present method would have given them additional seats. But the other wing is being completely ignored. The principle that the small provinces should be given better than average treatment has been forgotten. That is why the bill is eminently unfair. For the foreseeable future, there are to be no new seats for Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland or New Brunswick. Under the law enacted in 1974, New Brunswick would have been eligible for an additional seat after 1991. Saskatchewan would have been eligible for two more after 1991.

● (1500)

Focusing particularly on Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, I should like to make two points. The first is that the share of the House for these two provinces will decline. It is not easy to grasp this projection because we are dealing with two different totals. We are dealing with a share of a House of a certain size according to existing law and a share of the House that will be produced if Bill C-74 becomes law. However, it is a fact, as shown by the calculations put before the Senate by the sponsor of the bill, that the tendency of the new method will be to reduce increasingly the share in the House of Commons assigned to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

I raised this point with the minister responsible for the bill, the Honourable Ray Hnatyshyn, President of the Privy Council. I was unable to impress upon him the importance of this change. We are dealing here with percentage points and we have to remember that we are talking about only two or three members. These two or three members, looked upon from the

point of view of Ontario or from the point of view of an Ottawa bureaucrat do not amount to very much. However, approaching this matter conservatively, that is taking the lower of these two figures, the one member that Nova Scotia loses amounts to just a little less than 10 per cent of our total representation. In the case of Newfoundland, another member amounts to considerably more than 10 per cent—about 13 or 14 per cent. In other words, in the case of these small provinces, we are talking about a very appreciable decline in share of the House. It is comparable to the kind of decline that would take place if Ontario were to lose ten members. We can well imagine—I say to senators from the smaller provinces—the outcry such a situation would cause in national newspapers and in other places. It would be said, “George Brown, wouldst that thou wert living this hour. Ontario has need of thee.”

My second point relates to the fact that the populations of the constituencies of the provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Manitoba will increase in size. This is particularly important when dealing with provinces such as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia because, as any senator who has had experience in government will know, sea coast provinces tend to be very demanding in terms of what they want from their members of Parliament. There is always public business where you have wharves, breakwaters, navigation aids and the like.

Senator MacEachen: And the fisheries.

Senator Stewart: The fisheries create special demands upon members of Parliament, demands that a bureaucrat in Ottawa would not be likely to take into account when working out these statistics on a computer. It is shocking to think that according to the figures provided by the government, in every one of the three redistribution intervals—those based on the 1981 census, on the 1991 census and on the 2001 census—the constituencies which are projected to increase the most in population are found in Newfoundland. The constituencies in Nova Scotia will increase at the second highest rate. In fact, the government shows on its own projections that after the redistribution of 2001 the populations of the constituencies of Newfoundland will be the second largest in Canada. We are talking about Newfoundland, which, next to Prince Edward Island, is the smallest province, a province which has a very active fishery and which is likely to have very active marine activity in the near future. In terms of average population, the constituencies in Newfoundland will be around 99,714. Let us compare that figure with a large province such as Quebec, which is projected to have an average constituency population of 92,048, and Ontario, which is projected to have an average constituency population of 99,615—almost as big as Newfoundland, a small province, but not quite. Compare that Newfoundland figure to that of British Columbia, which is projected to have a population of 98,600.

It may be said that the demographic projections are not to be taken all that seriously. However, they are the projections on which the validity of this method of distributing seats is being explained and defended. Consequently, we have to take the projections seriously. What the figures show, whether we are talking in terms of the share of the House of Commons or