

*Representation Act, 1985*

I make this impassioned plea to the Government to listen well to the words of all three political Parties which represent northern Ontario to ensure that we are guaranteed these 11 seats. If that can be done, then I say with honesty that the people of northern Ontario will applaud the Government regardless of its political stripe.

**Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comments with respect to the question of representation in the context with which the amendments have been laid out. My comments are to reinforce the comments made with respect to the necessity of recognizing special cases for remote and northern areas. The coast of British Columbia, northern British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Atlantic Canada are all areas of the country in which it is extremely important for representation to have an impact on the Government of Canada. In this regard I ask Hon. Members to consider the question of fisheries. In Canada, the bulk of our fisheries is conducted in two areas of the country which a small number of Members of Parliament represent when compared with central Canada. It is something in the order of 20 Members of Parliament versus 210. In order for important issues in the country to make an impact, the question of protecting representation in rural and remote areas is extremely important.

The second point with which I would like to deal is the question of Schedule III ridings. I take my own riding as an example, but certainly I could use as an example the ridings of other Members of Parliament who are faced with this task. The riding of Comox-Powell River which I represent consists of 30,000 square miles of the coast of British Columbia. There are more than 120,000 people in the riding. My riding, compared with Prince Edward Island, is five times bigger with virtually the same population. While Prince Edward Island is guaranteed four Members of Parliament and ministerial representation in Cabinet, the Comox-Powell River area has one Member of Parliament. There are no government offices to speak of in my riding. They are in the major centres but, in my cases, they may be 300 miles away from the people who need them. Contact is impossible. If a constituent is dealing with a regional or district office it will be seen that they are located only in Vancouver or Victoria and are only accessible by long distance telephone calls. They are impossible for constituents to visit. The upshot of all this is that the Member of Parliament becomes the key point of contact for the federal Government. The task is extremely difficult.

The riding of Vancouver Quadra, which is represented by the Leader of the Official Opposition, is 30 square blocks of Vancouver in which one constituency assistant in one office can handle the bulk of the work. The difficulty facing those who represent large Schedule III ridings is that it is impossible to obtain government services in a reasonable manner for constituents. It is difficult for a single Member of Parliament to try to handle a large population and a difficult piece of geography. Again, there are no highways, no regular air service and no regular and effective marine transportation. The Government has to consider special measures in terms of

obtaining fair and effective representation for the people who live in those areas and the issues which affect their lives.

Another aspect of this complex problem is that if one takes the 30 square blocks of Vancouver Quadra one will see that there are not complex issues such as those dealing with search and rescue along 300 miles of the coast of British Columbia. That riding does not have a large number of native bands in remote areas which face extremely difficult problems. The fishing industry is not carried on in that particular area. Again, marine and air transportation are not major factors in the day-to-day lives of the people who live in Vancouver Quadra when compared with the lives of those who live in the ridings of Skeena, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon or, for that matter, Comox-Powell River. It is extremely important for those people to have adequate representation. Again, I use the comparison of Comox-Powell River and Prince Edward Island where we are looking at a ratio of four to one with all the ancillary services which are provided to a Member of Parliament.

The last point I would like to make is with respect to my concern that aboriginal people are not guaranteed representation in the House of Commons. The area I represent, the riding of Skeena and many of the Schedule III ridings in the northern parts of our country, have large representations of aboriginal people. They are not guaranteed seats in the House of Commons. Their perspective of viewing the nation, its development and the major issues which face it are unique and extremely important. They are becoming more and more important each day. We may not have been faced with the crises of Lyell Island, Meares Island and those which continue in different geographic locations if we had been able to guarantee and at least address the problem. It is a problem. There has to be a guarantee with respect to representation of aboriginal people in the House of Commons.

With that final comment I will conclude my remarks. I hope that some of the suggestions made here and the problems outlined do not fall upon deaf ears.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Tardif (Richmond-Wolfe):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a few comments on Bill C-74.

Not long ago, I represented a riding that came very close to disappearing from the electoral map, as a result of a decision to realign the boundaries of electoral districts.

I think that basically, in a debate like the one we are having today, we should ask ourselves exactly what kind of role a Member of Parliament is supposed to play. What are a Member's responsibilities?

A Member of Parliament is of course a legislator, but a Member is also a liaison officer and a communicator. I think we must not lose sight of this very fundamental role the Member is expected to play. I think that if we accept the premise that a Member's role lies in liaison and in communicating, legislating changes in electoral boundaries would