

that on Thursday I have to go out of town for committee duties.

Honourable senators, I give notice that tomorrow, Wednesday, February 19, 1986, I will move:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, which was authorized by the Senate on October 29, 1985, to study and report upon the Consultation Paper on Training, and the document entitled: "Employment Opportunities: Preparing Canadians for a Better Future", or any subcommittee so authorized by the Committee, be empowered to adjourn from place to place within and outside Canada for the purpose of such study.

I shall give the reasons why this should be so.

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, is leave granted respecting rule 43(1)? And is the Notice of Motion agreed to?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I want to be quite clear as to what we have done. We have given the honourable senator leave to introduce his notice of motion today and to speak to the motion tomorrow.

Some Hon. Senators: Yes.

Senator Roblin: Thank you.

● (1450)

REPRESENTATION BILL, 1985

THIRD READING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

Hon. Jacques Flynn moved the third reading of Bill C-74, to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 and the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act and to provide for certain matters in relation to the 1981 decennial census.

Hon. John B. Stewart: Honourable senators, the bill now before the Senate is one to which many honourable senators should pay close attention. I refer especially to senators from both the growing western provinces—I mean particularly Alberta and British Columbia—and some of the eastern provinces, particularly Newfoundland and Nova Scotia—and to that I would add Manitoba and Saskatchewan; in other words, two rapidly growing provinces and four smaller provinces which are not growing as rapidly.

One of the main functions of the Senate is to protect the interests of the provinces. This bill certainly affects the interests of British Columbia and Alberta, as well as those of four smaller provinces.

I suggest to honourable senators that the government is being unfair to British Columbia and Alberta by proceeding with this bill to change the method by which constituencies for the election of members of the House of Commons are assigned among the several provinces.

In 1974 Parliament enacted a law governing the redistribution of constituencies. Under that law, following the decennial

[Senator Gigantès.]

census of 1981, British Columbia was to have gained five seats, and Alberta was to have gained six seats. That redistribution was well under way by the time Parliament was dissolved for the election of 1984. The redistribution under the existing law could have been completed in a relatively short period after the election.

For its own reasons the government decided not to resume the redistribution under the 1974 law. For its own reasons it decided to make a new beginning, to bring in a new method by which seats would be assigned to the several provinces.

However, it did not move immediately on this matter. It was not until September 16, 1985—over a year after the election—that Bill C-74 was introduced for first reading in the House of Commons.

I assume that the bill will become law fairly soon; but we have the testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada that it requires upward of two and a half years before a redistribution can be carried to the point at which it can be used for a general election.

I am not privy to the Prime Minister's intentions; nor indeed am I privy to the intentions of the backbenchers on the government side of the House of Commons. But it is conceivable that the Prime Minister or the backbenchers on the government side in the House of Commons will want an election in 1987. If an election were to take place in 1987 for any reason, the constituencies would be those drawn on the basis of the decennial census of 1971. That would be so unfair to British Columbia and Alberta that we would have to say that the government, by waiting until September 16, 1985, to bring in this bill was playing fast and loose with the representation due to those two rapidly growing provinces in western Canada. They have placed in jeopardy those new seats that British Columbia and Alberta would have been assigned under the existing law.

That is one reason why I believe that this whole venture is bad. I will not say any more on that, because I know that other senators feel strongly on that point and may wish to speak on it.

However, I wish to say a good deal more about another point. I believe the government is being unfair to certain small provinces, specifically Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Manitoba. I hope to be able to convince honourable senators that I am not making a mistake when I say that in this bill the government is being unfair to those provinces.

I will direct honourable senators' attention specifically to the application of the method, now being put before Parliament by the government, to the outcome of the 1981 census. There we have hard figures. There we are not dealing with demographic projections made by Statistics Canada.

Since 1867 the basic rule by which constituencies in the House of Commons are assigned to the several provinces has been that of representation by population. But that rule has always been moderated to give somewhat better than average treatment to the smaller provinces. Sometimes better than average has been a good deal better than average. We have