

issue affects this Chamber and all Members but, most important, it affects the way Canadians elect their Government and the way in which they will be serviced by their representatives. This is not our place, but Canada's place. Therefore, Canadians ought to have the effective opportunity, on a proper basis, to suggest how they want the Government to function and which services they want rendered. We have not allowed Canadians that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is wrong. I hope that somehow at the end of this parliamentary sitting those ideas can sift down to the government benches so that the Government will change the direction in which it has chosen to move the country.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments.

Mr. Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments, and I also have question for my hon. friend.

First of all, I would like to say I am entirely in agreement with the line of reasoning he followed when describing the work of a Member of the House of Commons and the problems involved in maintaining a balance between the responsibilities we have here in Ottawa, either in the House or in committee, and those we have in our constituencies. I know, for instance, that especially during the holidays there are a lot of activities in our ridings, organized by the senior citizens' club or municipal employees or whatever, which people would like to see their Members attend. That is of course quite normal, and I also think that, generally, people tend to be very understanding.

In any case, I would like to tell him that I share his views on the subject, except that I would like to stress that he was referring to the Toronto area, and what we do not particularly like about the Bill before the House, and I speak as a Quebecer, not that we are opposed to an increase in representation from Alberta, in fact, we suggested that very thing—the Liberal Party suggested it during the previous Parliament. We have no objection to that, and in fact, we fully support an increase in Members from Alberta and Ontario. However, what we do object to most strenuously is that the Bill before the House, the Bill the Government is trying to ram down our throats, will cap representation from Quebec at 75 Members until the year 2001.

And I wonder why Conservative Members from Quebec are not taking part in this debate on a non-partisan basis. This is the first time a Bill to change our electoral boundaries has failed to get a consensus from the parties. This legislation is not important to the Progressive Conservative Party or the Liberals or the New Democratic Party. It is important to the Parliament of this country. If the electoral map is modified by the wish of the majority, the whole balance of our democratic system will be in jeopardy.

Representation Act, 1985

I would like to ask my hon. friend who just spoke, whether he, as an Ontarian, thinks it is fair and equitable—does he think that my position as a Quebecer, which is to fight against this partisan capping at 75 Members, up to the year 2001, does he think that is a normal position to take?

Does he consider my position too partisan, too regional, or is he, as an elected representative from Ontario, prepared to support a position that is held by the Liberal Members from Quebec? We seem to be alone in our desire to bring to the attention of the general public something I feel is a definite shortcoming, not because we are opposed to what the others are asking, but in the previous Parliament, the Liberal Members from Quebec had agreed, and they were very numerous—that Ontario should be allowed to increase its representation by several seats and that British Columbia should do likewise. We think it is only fair to give Quebec a chance to pick up a few seats. We were supposed to go from 75 to 79, and now we are being capped at 75 seats.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. Thank you.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raises some very good points, the first about the balance of one's work as a Member of Parliament, and the second about the situation faced in his home province of Quebec. On the balance issue I would like to point out that while Members from Toronto, such as myself, certainly have onerous responsibilities in dealing on a personal base with constituents, one must cushion that with the job of other Members of Parliament. The difficulties of other Members of Parliament from Vancouver or eastern Canada are increased ten-fold. I, personally, was used to a personal type of representation when I was a municipal councillor in North York. That is a very different type of elected representation, which I sincerely miss.

With regard to Quebec, that is what I meant when I spoke about Members of Parliament having the opportunity to offer ideas on the floor of the House of Commons and in committee. It is the inflexibility that we see with the handling of the Quebec situation that I think speaks volumes to the negative aspect of how Bill C-74 is being approached.

● (1220)

The Hon. Member mentions that in a discussion on the number of seats and whether or not that number be frozen at 75, we, on this side of the House, feel that we should not be given that inflexibility. Representations from Quebecers are sorely missing in this debate. The Member is not being partisan in making the representation he just did a few moments ago. He indicated that if Quebec Members of Parliament on the government benches who are of Conservative stripe feel that this is such a good deal for Quebecers and for their constituents, then why are they not on their feet deliberating and telling their constituents the reasons they believe Bill C-74 is an appropriate Bill? Government Members are not doing that with any consistency. Conservative Members are not