

S. O. 31

All kinds of institutions are looking at holding the line, reducing numbers or not going ahead with other plans. I notice new provincial electoral reform has just come forward in my own province. I have not spoken on what I think of it. They are reducing seats. The ridings in Prince Edward Island are held by two members. There are 16 ridings and two members for each. This is a throwback to the days when there were two houses. It was 100 years ago that one of the houses was eliminated but two members per riding were retained. They are now talking about changing to one member per riding. I do not know what the end result will be in the number of seats.

It is not the best time for us to go forward and increase seats in the House with the added costs. The provinces that would gain are well represented in the House right now. This can continue. After the committee makes its recommendations we can look at the readjustments.

At this time the whole process needs to be re-examined. It has been many years since it has been looked at. We have been using the same formula for approximately 30 years. Everything is up for review in Parliament, everything in our country. It is not such a terrible thing to do so.

Many people have said that we should expand the number of seats or that we should go forward with redistribution. Again I agree with my colleague from Vancouver Quadra. Maybe the way in which the electoral system has operated for the last number of years has not been the best.

For instance, we should have an automatic formula that kicks in after a census is taken and ridings need to be readjusted. Many times over the years ridings have been readjusted to make it better for some members and make it worse for others. This has always been a trend in our electoral system. As a member for some years now in this House and in the provincial legislature I have indicated that it should be done fairly for every person and for every riding. The people who should be getting the best arrangement are the voters. I do not think that has always been the case.

When we conclude debate, vote on the bill and it goes to committee I trust it will be studied seriously. I am sure the committee will do so, with members from all parties in the House. Then the committee will report back to us and recommend that some changes need to be made.

I am sure, as we go along in the governance of the country, there will be many more important issues that need to be tackled than whether we should change the boundaries and add more seats to this institution. There are now 295 seats. As I said a few minutes ago, the men and women who represent the provinces across the country and the two territories give good representation. Of course one would always like to see more members on his or her side of the House depending on what is at issue. I do

not think that is what is intended by the motion although we all know that has happened in many cases in the past.

This is a good time to tackle the issue of setting it aside, reviewing it and at the end of the day coming forward with a mechanism that will make it a better way of deciding on how we raise or lower the number of seats in given areas.

● (1355)

As I said, in my own special case perhaps I should not be the one speaking on it, but I come from the smallest province in Canada. We have four members of Parliament and those seats were enshrined in the Constitution. That was one of the arrangements made in 1873 when the province of Prince Edward Island came into Canada. It was enshrined again in 1982 when the Constitution was amended and brought home to Canada. This is given to the smaller provinces so that they will not go below a certain level. It is the same in the United States. Every state is guaranteed that it will have representation in Congress.

As we head to question period, I say that I had great concern about the way we were rushing into this matter. There were certainly representations made by many members across the country to put a hold on the process for the present time, let the committee have a serious look at it and let us see what needs to be done. I am sure all constituents in the country who are represented here will decide at the end of the day whether or not we do the right thing.

As we look at what is to take place in the country over this period of time I am sure there are issues that can well be addressed just as easy as electoral reform. I am sure all members of the House will join with us when we vote on laying the matter aside and letting what is to happen in the future be determined. I know that Canada will be well represented by this action.

The Speaker: Order. It being two o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WAYNE GRETZKY

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant): Mr. Speaker, last night Wayne Gretzky scored his 802nd NHL goal to surpass Gordie Howe's all-time NHL scoring record.

Wayne Gretzky was raised and educated in Brantford and his family continues to reside in my riding. Many of us have followed his career with a great deal of interest and enjoyment. Number 99 has won nine scoring titles, the Hart trophy nine times, the Lady Byng trophy three times and the Conn Smythe on two occasions. He has his name on the Stanley Cup four