

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 17, 1985

The House met at 11 a.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

REPRESENTATION ACT, 1985

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed, from Monday, December 9, consideration of the motion of Mr. Hnatyshyn that Bill C-74, an Act 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, be read the third time and passed; and the amendment of Mr. Prud'homme (p. 9258).

Mr. Speaker: Before resuming debate, may I advise Hon. Members that through an administrative error, and only that, today's Order Paper and Projected Order of Business are incomplete. Pursuant to the Order made Monday, December 16, 1985, that is yesterday, all questions necessary to complete the third reading stage of Bill C-74 now before the House will be put at 4.45 o'clock p.m. this day.

Resuming debate. When the House adjourned on December 9, 1985, the Hon. Member for Cochrane-Superior (Mr. Penner) had the floor.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Mr. Speaker, now that we are down to the final period in the debate on Bill C-74, I want to reiterate that the Party of which I am a member will be voting against this Bill. We are in opposition to the Bill and, in this final stage I want to make it clear why we are in opposition to it and what it is we find objectionable.

We regret very much that there is not more time to debate. We think we have sound arguments and given time more and more members would agree that there are deficiencies in Bill C-74 and would be prepared to support us.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, time allocation has been imposed. That has been dealt with and I cannot go over the arguments of objection that we have to the use of time allocation in a Bill like this. It is essential to indicate, though, that we believe this to be a parliamentary Bill, that there should be full debate, much more consultation and that we should be proceeding by way of agreement.

Why do we have Bill C-74 anyway? What is the reason for which we have, as a primary order of business, Bill C-74? If we accepted the work of the previous boundary commissions under the Act of Parliament brought in by the last administra-

tion the House of Commons would be growing to 310 members. That seems to be the basic objection and the main reason for Bill C-74. As it is with the legislation before us, we will have 295 Members of Parliament instead of 310. The argument is on the basis of cost efficiency and of reducing expenditures at the federal level, something no Member of Parliament objects to at all. Nevertheless we will have 15 fewer Members of Parliament than in the previous proposal. We may create some injustices and some unfair situations in the country.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, if our main concern is to reduce expenditures to be more cost effective, I think other areas ought to be looked at first, the bank depositor's Bill, for instance. We do not know who will receive the large *ex gratia* payments from the taxpayers or how much they will get. If you want to save money, something in the order of about a billion dollars is there and we might take a serious look at that. If we really wanted to be serious about saving money, perhaps we should be talking about the central question in the parliamentary system of Canada, namely, the existence of two Houses. That is an issue rarely raised or discussed.

In Canada at the present time we have this House of Commons elected for a short period of time. Members are accountable to the people. We have another House whose Members are appointed up to the age of 75, and to whom they are accountable no one is quite certain. In order for there to be cost savings involved with 15 Members of Parliament, the Government has brought in Bill C-74. It should be clearly understood that Bill C-74 does not give us strict adherence to representation by population, not at all. It is not what Members of Parliament want in the first place. If we had strict adherence to representation by population, then I do not think we could consider ourselves to be a federal state. With the vast geography of Canada and being a federal state, it is obvious and clear to every Member of Parliament who thinks about it that we cannot have representation by population. There will always be a pull between urban and rural representation, between the settled areas of Canada and those areas on the developing frontier. That pull will always be there between the two and in a federal state neither can be ignored. Therefore, strict adherence to representation by population makes no sense at all.

For example, I have never heard anyone argue that there should not be a Member of Parliament for Yukon. Yukon has only 20,000 people. No one has argued that the Yukon should not have its representative in the House of Commons. The Northwest Territories has double the population, about 44,000, and it has two Members of Parliament. I have never heard anyone argue that the Northwest Territories ought not to be represented by two MPs.