

Senator MacEachen: Honourable senators, I do not want to be too insistent, but I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition—

Senator Flynn: The Leader of the Opposition?

Senator MacEachen: The Leader of the Government—that we will be wanting to know when we resume exactly what the attitude of the Prime Minister is. Was the “blind-side” comment directed to the President of France, one of his other colleagues or to Mr. Bourassa? We would like to know.

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, now that we have my status clarified, I can say that I will take my honourable friend's observations under advisement.

Senator MacEachen: I do not want advisement, I want answers.

Senator Roblin: Well, I am using “Versailles” language.

Senator MacEachen: Good.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

WHEREABOUTS OF PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

Hon. Charles McElman: Honourable senators, though I agree wholeheartedly with the Leader of the Government that one should not lend too much credence to reports of the media, there is one that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of last Friday which concerns me as a Maritimer. It is very short, and I shall read it. It says:

After cutting 200 jobs from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Fisheries Minister Thomas Siddon was eager to get out some good news in several places across the country, including Halifax.

As the minister was in British Columbia, his parliamentary secretary, Mel Gass,—

Mr. Gass is a member of Parliament for the constituency of Malpeque in Prince Edward Island. The quotation continues:

—was sent to Halifax yesterday to give the glad tidings to the East Coast fishing establishment. Trouble is, according to DFO sources, Mr. Gass caught the wrong plane, ended up in Toronto and missed the planned Halifax press conference.

As a Maritimer concerned for another Maritimer who is a colleague in this Parliament and who was acting in a quasi-ministerial capacity, could I ask the Leader of the Government, has he been found yet?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have had a number of questions asked of me this session, but that is one I cannot answer.

REPRESENTATION BILL, 1985

THIRD READING

On the Order:

[Senator Flynn.]

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Flynn, P.C., seconded by the Honourable Senator Macquarrie, for the third reading of the Bill C-74, intituled: “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”.—(*Honourable Senator MacEachen, P.C.*)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I would like to make some comments on this particular bill. In fact, I want to weep some angry tears over the replacement of the amalgam method by the inferior system contained in Bill C-74. I want to express my deep regret at the loss of ten seats which were to have been provided to the Atlantic provinces under the existing law and which will now be removed by the adoption of this particular bill. I wish to express my own interest in this particular subject, since it was once my responsibility to provide a solution to the problems experienced in 1974 with regard to the representation of Canada. Prior to the 1974 election, as President of the Privy Council, I put before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections a number of alternative proposals. Of course, a number of members of that committee also had ideas, but ultimately the method outlined in the act which is now being replaced was introduced into the House of Commons on December 2, 1974, by the then President of the Privy Council, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp. It was adopted by the House and, subsequently, by the Senate. In his statement at the time, Mr. Sharp outlined the principles which were the source of the provisions of that bill incorporating the amalgam method. The amalgam method was adopted because of the general dissatisfaction at that time with the then existing system. For example, provinces which had not lost any of their population were losing seats under the system that prevailed prior to 1974. Other provinces, such as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland were already at their Senate floor level or were very close to it. Indeed, the province of Quebec was slated to lose two seats at that time. The urban centres were experiencing explosive growth and the rural members were faced, because of the freeze on the size of the House, with representing larger and larger areas and larger and larger numbers of electors. We had many discussions prior to the introduction of the bill. Indeed, a separate bill was introduced in 1973 to suspend the operation of the Representation Act. On that occasion Mr. Mazankowski, speaking on behalf of rural members, made the following comment:

—even those provinces which do not stand to lose seats under the redistribution process now before the House will lose rural representation very heavily. These rural ridings are swelling to unmanageable proportions and as a rural representative I simply cannot accept this proposition.

It may be of interest to honourable senators—

Senator Flynn: In territory or in numbers?

• (1440)

Senator MacEachen: In territory and in numbers. Pardon me, I should say in territory. Senator Flynn is correct, but the