

*Representation Act, 1985*

that they want to preserve the personal element in dealing with their Governments and elected Members of Parliament.

Although this is my first term in the House of Commons, I perceive the role of a Member of Parliament as having changed over the years. You know better than I, Mr. Speaker, that a Member has a different role now compared to when he or she first became a Member. A Member now has become almost a social service agency, if you will. Canadians come to us not only to get information and solve problems in our own area of responsibility, but also to deal with problems that are outside of federal responsibility but that are nonetheless very serious. Canadians are saying that they want to maintain personal accessibility to their Governments. They do not want to get a computerized letter in response to a problem which is very real for them and their families. They want their Member of Parliament to deal adequately and sensitively with their problems.

What happens with a Member of Parliament in the normal discharging of our responsibilities? I will tell you what happens. From Monday to Friday Members of Parliament are largely confined to the capital and, more specifically, to this House. Whether we are making representations as I am now, working on committees like those I will be attending this afternoon, talking to the bureaucrats in an attempt to solve constituency problems, or replying to our constituents, we are for the most part here in this place. Therefore, when it comes to dealing with our community, caring for our constituents on a one-to-one basis, we have basically a weekend at our disposal to do those things. When we go back to our ridings, most of us have constituency days, whether it be a Saturday or a Sunday. We spend most of the day huddled in our offices trying to meet with our constituents and deal with their problems. However, there are also other parts of the community where people do not necessarily have a particular problem concerning pensions or taxes or immigration. Nonetheless, they require the presence and thoughtfulness of their Member of Parliament. So, after you have finished dealing with the problems, you try to attend a local function, visit with local senior citizens or attend a dinner in your constituency. You try not to leave out the schools. You try to talk to the young people. Of course, those of us with large industrial parks in our ridings strive to meet with business people on a regular basis, visit their plants, and determine if the economic proposals of this Government are working or are simply some theoretical pie-in-the-sky. If you want to do all those things as a Member of Parliament and do them well, then I submit that the weekend is not enough time. At the same time, we cannot be in the riding Monday to Friday because then the first question constituents will ask you is: What are you doing here? Are you not supposed to be in Ottawa looking after our needs?

To be a Member of Parliament in 1985 is a balancing act between serving one's constituents while being here in Ottawa, and serving them on a one-to-one personalized basis in the constituency. Canadians request and rightfully demand that personalized service. I suggest that we are running counter to that desire if we arbitrarily, on a very partisan basis, put a cap

or a limit on the number of Members of Parliament who have to represent an increasing population.

A good book, called *Megatrends*, was written, which most members have read and it was packed, as was *Future Shock*, with descriptions of the high technology development of our contemporary society. However, it differed from *Future Shock* in the sense that the author said, "Look, with increased technology, higher technology, you also need higher human touch". One chapter, entitled "High Technology—High Touch" was devoted completely to that concept. The author was right. As we grow more impersonal in today's society, as the computer age arrives, we nevertheless have to increase the human element. The people behind the computers have to learn that the individual still has a place in Canadian society. We should not look at the case of the unemployed or any other case as merely a statistic. We are beginning to move away from personalized service and things become statistics rather than individual challenges that we should be championing.

● (1210)

Therefore, when the Government invokes closure to cap the number of seats in the country, I do not think it is acting properly on such a fundamental piece of legislation. I suggest that that is not appropriate on any piece of legislation. However, while MPs are telling the Chamber that their regions somehow feel alienated and that there are not enough seats in their region and are suggesting that we take seats from one province and redistribute them to make things more equitable, we should not be moving on this piece of legislation as we are. We still have a way to go. We still have ideas to percolate through the system. We still have recommendations and suggestions to hear from the Canadian public.

It is useless to conduct public hearings, which will be the next step after the Debate in the Chamber, because the parameters have already been drawn. Therefore, Canadians can only give their impressions within the general confines of those parameters. Canadians from all parts of Canada are going to come forward and reflect the aspirations which we are espousing in the House, Mr. Speaker. When they do, we will have to tell them that we are sorry, we have already put the cart before the horse, we have already capped the number of seats for their regions and that they should, therefore, scratch that point out and give us another one. Canadians are obviously going to leave those public hearings feeling very frustrated and wondering why they were asked for input when it will certainly have no meaning at all.

That is what is at the heart of the debate on Bill C-74, Mr. Speaker. We must allow Canadians, through their elected representatives, to articulate their concerns. It is hypocrisy to say that we have the best interests of Canadians at heart and then to move on Bill C-74, which will determine how Canadians will elect their Government, in such a shoddy manner. We cannot have it both ways.

I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, in the way I started, by suggesting to the House that this is the wrong method by which to deal with such a fundamental issue as Bill C-74. This