

*Supply*

the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke), who brought in a virtually identical bill, and which was discussed. The hon. member from B.C. obviously does not understand that, because he obviously does not read the proposals put forward—

**Mr. Huntington:** I will be on my feet! I will reply to this garbage!

**Mr. Axworthy:**—or even read the resolutions put forward by his own members. But that, as we realize, is typical behaviour on the part of Tory Members of Parliament, that they have so little interest in what is going on in their own caucus, let alone in this House, that they are not relevant to what is taking place.

The fact is that these reforms have already received extensive debate, both in the Senate chamber and in this chamber, in terms of coming to grips with that particular issue and trying to find ways of solving that problem.

The kind of assertions made by the hon. member for Oshawa, in Ontario, in presenting this resolution, has—

**Miss Jewett:** He is a national leader!

**Mr. Axworthy:**—somehow left the impression that if people in British Columbia had to go to the polls before 5.30, it would deny them their right to vote. He did not quite say so, but he was somehow hinting or leaving the impression that they would not have the same amount of time. However, what he really forgot was that it is clearly entrenched in Bill C-113 that every worker and every voter will have the right to receive four hours off to go and vote at any time during the day.

**An hon. Member:** Look at the bill, Lloyd! Section 48(b)!

**Mr. Axworthy:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have looked at the bill. The fact is, that it is a clear and abiding part of that reform that any worker, any person, any voter has the right to get from the employer four hours to go and vote—

**Miss Jewett:** On election day.

**Mr. Axworthy:**—in advance polls or on election day. That is a choice. The fact that they deny it simply shows that they are so blinded and clouded by their own rhetoric that they do not see that that basic entrenchment and defence is there.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Axworthy:** It is surprising that they are taking so much of our time in such a frivolous way when, in fact, that protection is already inherently clear in the bill itself. However, I think that we have perhaps had an opportunity to look at other ranges of reform. I think that there is certainly good cause and reason to examine the issue of how people in western, central and Atlantic Canada may themselves have better representation. I, for one, would certainly welcome debate in this House on how we can change some of our fundamental national institutions to bring about reform of the electoral process. We should be talking about the way we come to grips with the basic issue of Senate reform, to provide a major opportunity for regional representation at the national level, based upon

representation by population. It is clear to me that the flaw in the democratic system, the flaw in our federalism, is that the second chamber, which was originally designed to ensure that the regions would gain full representation, is an appointed house and therefore does not carry with it the same degree of legitimacy that an elected body would have. Therefore, people in regions in which there are not heavy or large concentrations of population tend to put a great deal of emphasis, for example, in assuming that only the provincial governments can represent the regional interest.

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As a result, we have not had the opportunity at the national stage to have those rejoinders openly debated and considered in an authoritative way and recognized in an authoritative way by the regions in which there are not heavy concentrations of population. How much more helpful it would have been, and how much more constructive, if we had received a resolution from the NDP considering that kind of reform, concerning how we go about changing the manner and form of representation in the Senate, or the manner and form of representation in the courts or in the Crown corporations or in the regulatory agencies, to ensure that our federalism would work much better and that western Canadians, those in the prairie provinces and in the Atlantic provinces would feel a much closer tie to the national arena than they presently do.

That, Mr. Speaker, would have been something that all members of the House could have bitten their teeth into and on which they could have had a good, useful, constructive, healthy and vital debate, one that would have a purpose to it, one that would have a reason to it, one that would have a rationale to it, not one that would simply serve the organizers of Vancouver east, which is really all that this bill is trying to do. It is set up to respond to the puppet calls of the west coast unions on their NDP members. That is all we are debating. It is a shame that we have such a cherished and valuable space of time in the House and we use it on measures such as this.

This party has certainly taken the lead in providing for parliamentary reform. It has provided a major leadership in electoral reform, with the Electoral Expenses Act. Now that we have our Constitution at home and a Bill of Rights, we are looking at further opportunities for changes in the political institutions, providing for a much broader debate on the way regions could be represented at the national level, to provide for a much broader and more open system of representation in Parliament and in the electoral system. That is the kind of debate we should be thinking of, not one that is based on pure, unadulterated, naked, political interest.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, I find that what I have just heard is some of the worst kind of speaking in connection with an election reform act that I thought I would ever hear here in this House. Not by one word