

on the table, and in the opinion of some, enough to satisfy the pros and cons.

At the white paper stage of the exercise—and one must note that it took place in June of 1985, at a time when most members of Parliament are buried under a heavy legislative agenda and are under terrible pressure to get things moving and fast—the public was not invited to testify. Invitations were sent out to a select few professors, as a matter of fact, two of them. I am not commenting on the quality of the exercise. I am simply noting that it occurred and the circumstances under which it occurred. There was no advertising inviting comments from the public at that stage, an unusual omission or oversight, if you want to call it that, in the case of a document normally published for widespread examination by the Canadian public in general.

A few months later, in the fall of 1985, Bill C-74 was introduced and the general public was invited to present briefs and comments on the proposed legislation. Most of the responses came from the academic community, the Canadian Labour Congress being a notable exception. We all know in what high esteem that organization holds the Senate, so I will pass.

There is nothing wrong with having academics appear before a committee of either house. On the contrary, these people are generally helpful through their understanding of the process, the law and the historical patterns. But what was the response of John Q. Public and Jane W. Public? Practically nil. Is that to say that there was no interest out there? As I said in my remarks on second reading, the public will only understand when the act is being implemented and its provisions are being applied, but then it is generally too late to do anything unless some special effort is made to popularize, if I may use that expression, complicated matters at the legislative study stage. I do not believe that that was done in this instance. The law is the law and redistribution commissioners apply the law as they read and interpret it, not as the public feels it ought to be applied or as parliamentarians thought they would have it applied. Professor John C. Courtney made this point tellingly in the House committee when it was dealing with the legislation.

As to the argument that we have heard enough witnesses, that enough time had been provided, I quote a letter which came into my hands by direct mail, so to speak. It is dated November 4, 1985, and addressed to the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6. Although the clerk is a person of the other sex, it begins:

Dear Sir,

The advertisement in the *Globe and Mail* of October 31, 1985, states that deadline for submissions to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections must be received by you by November 15, 1985.

Two weeks to research, study, and submit recommendations on a matter as important historically as representation by population is completely inadequate.

As a representative of the Federal Progressive Conservative women in British Columbia who are interested in studying changes that a Progressive Conservative government proposes, may I request the Committee to extend the date for submissions at least to February 22, 1986.

Today is February 19, 1986. The letter goes on:

We trust that notice of reception of submissions to your Committee was adequately given in British Columbian publications.

Yours truly,  
Margaret Maxwell  
Director, FPCWABC

Copies were sent to the chairman of the committee and another member of Parliament. Who wrote that letter? It was written by an official of the Federal Progressive Conservative Women's Association of British Columbia who was genuinely concerned with the redistribution process. Was this person given the opportunity to appear in the other place or in this place? I do not know, but I do not think so. Perhaps she received one of those mysterious telephone calls from the Prime Minister's Office, but it is obvious that her request for an extension of the date for the submission of briefs at least to February 22, 1986, was not sustained by the committee of the other place.

● (1500)

Today is February 19 and we have reached what I believe is the final stage of Bill C-74. This woman's request was for an extension to at least February 22 for submissions. This is a member of the public making what I think is a very reasonable request dealing with what is perceived by many to be a complicated bill. Therefore, let no one point a finger at the Senate, at Senator Stewart or myself, for suggesting that enough witnesses have not been heard. We are well ahead of the schedule proposed by the supporters of the Progressive Conservative government. We, on this side of the house, would gladly give the FPCWABC the hearing they requested before the end of this week, if they so wished. I am in the hands of the house.

[Translation]

During the debate on second reading, Senator Flynn, the government's official spokesman, said as follows:

... the rules for drawing the boundaries of electoral districts substantially reflect the views of all parties. There were some differences of opinion, but according to my information, nothing substantial.

I am quoting from page 1751 of the *Debates of the Senate* of December 18, 1985. Senator Flynn went on to say:

In any event, I would say this is an area that almost exclusively concerns the House of Commons, and I think that we as a non-elected chamber and as appointed legislators are hardly in a position to tell the members of the House of Commons how they should proceed to draw the boundaries of their electoral districts.