

**CUSTOMS TARIFF (No. 2)**

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance)** moved, that Bill C-39, to amend the Customs Tariff (No. 2), be read the first time and printed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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**WAYS AND MEANS****EXCISE TAX ACT AND EXCISE ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of a ways and means motion to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act.

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance)** moved:

That a ways and means motion with respect to an act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act, laid upon the Table, Monday, November 18, 1974, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

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**EXCISE TAX ACT AND EXCISE ACT**

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance)** moved that Bill C-40, to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act, be read the first time and printed.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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● (1530)

**REPRESENTATION ACT, 1974****MEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND ESTABLISH ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONS**

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of Privy Council)** moved that Bill C-36, to provide for representation in the House of Commons, to establish electoral boundaries commissions and to remove the temporary suspension of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to provide for a new and equitable method of redistributing seats in the House of Commons among the provinces of Canada. It deals with a matter that touches the very fabric of our democracy, that is of deep concern to every Canadian. A just system of the representation of the people is the very life-blood of our democratic process.

In this spirit, it has been recognized since confederation that the development of a method of redistributing seats among the provinces in the House of Commons rises above partisan politics. It was for this reason that the matter of developing a new method in keeping with evolving population trends and our fundamental democratic principles

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was entrusted, in the last parliament, to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections of this House.

Hon. members will recall that the redistribution of seats based on the 1971 census, and calculated according to the present Section 51 of the British North America Act, produced results deemed to be undesirable by all parties. Parliament therefore decided, by way of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Suspension Act, to suspend the process of determining constituency boundaries until January, 1975.

My esteemed predecessor, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), presented various possible redistribution methods to the committee for its consideration, and members of the committee also advanced certain proposals. Despite considerable study the committee was unable to make a definite recommendation, since its deliberations were interrupted by the dissolution of parliament. However, as I mentioned in this House on October 11, I have reason to believe that it is the general feeling of hon. members that the committee was sufficiently close to completing its task that a bill can be introduced without further prior consideration by the committee.

The method contained in this bill, the amalgam method, was recommended by my predecessor in his statement to the committee, and was examined very closely. No fundamental changes have been introduced, but an omission has been corrected, as I will describe in due course.

Methods of redistributing seats in the House of Commons have historically reflected the particular federal make-up of Canada and the fundamental principles inherent in our democracy. The general principle of representation by population appeared in both the Quebec and London resolutions which preceded confederation and in the British North America Act in its original form. At the same time, however, the effects of the strict application of "rep by pop" were attenuated by a provision to the effect that no province should lose a member unless its population relative to that of Canada as a whole had decreased by 5 per cent or more.

Exceptions to the strict principle of representation by population have continued since that time. All provinces admitted to confederation since 1867 have, upon admission, received more members than would have been justified on a strict basis of representation by population. Since 1915, Section 51A of the British North America Act has provided, and I quote:

... a province shall always be entitled to a number of members in the House of Commons not less than the number of Senators representing such provinces.

In 1952 it was provided that the representation of no province should be reduced by 15 per cent in any one redistribution below that to which it would have been entitled in the previous redistribution were it not for the application of this rule, and that no province should have fewer members than a province with a smaller population.

These provisions have respected the federal structure of Canada by ensuring that no province should be deprived of an effective voice in the House of Commons. As Sir Wilfrid Laurier said in 1915: