

*Energy, Mines and Resources*

has a provision for 30 and 50. Indeed, in the printed version of the bill which was distributed today to members, Bill C-102, those numbers have been changed to 30 members of the House and 15 members of the Senate.

This raises serious procedural questions which I think hon. members on this side may well want to raise; that is, where did the change take place, and on whose authority was the change made? The Table indicates that the bill, which was tabled by the minister in the House and circulated, contains the figures of 50 members of the House and 20 members of the Senate. I do not know on whose authority the change was made. Perhaps the minister could rise at this point and explain how it happened.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, obviously I cannot give a particular explanation for the point raised by the hon. member, because Bill C-102 which I have with me provides, as he mentioned, for 30 members of the House of Commons and not less than 15 members of the Senate. This is the bill which the government approved. There may have been an error in the tabling or in the distribution. I would certainly be very happy to co-operate with the Chair in exploring the matter. If there is a technical problem, or if there has been an error anywhere, I would certainly be happy to indicate right now—

**Mr. Beatty:** Which bill is before the House?

**Mr. Lalonde:** —that when the bill goes to committee, the government will move an amendment to ensure that it is 30 members of the House and 15 members of the Senate.

**Mr. Beatty:** I want to know which bill I am debating.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, the difficulty which arises here is that while the minister, the government, and other members may have in their possession a bill which stipulates 30 members of the House and 15 members of the Senate, the fact remains that in so far as the official records of the House are concerned the bill tabled yesterday specified 50 members of the House of Commons and 20 members of the Senate. Naturally the question that arises is which bill is the House seized of, or which bill are we debating? The minister cannot hold out the assurance that he will amend a bill which is not before us and that would appear to be the case.

The minister cannot explain how the slip-up occurred. I cannot understand how instructions would have been given by the government to print the bill in the first place with the formula in that clause stipulated as 50 members of the House and 20 members of the Senate. Obviously there was either a typographical error or a change of policy, because what we have printed before members now is quite different than what we have in the possession of the House.

As a practical solution, I might suggest, if the government is advancing a bill based on the 30-15 formula, that we might seek unanimous consent to revert so that the government would be enabled to replace the bill tabled with the bill it wants us to debate. That could be achieved by unanimous consent.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** I see the Hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) nodding his head. The Chair is in possession of the bill which, as the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), and the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty), have indicated, refers to 50 members of the House of Commons and 20 members of the Senate. If I understand the mood of the House, it may be that the minister would put an amendment to correct those two figures, and the House would then debate on the understanding that those are the figures. Is that what the hon. member for Yukon proposes?

**Mr. Lalonde:** No, no.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am proposing something quite different. I am proposing that the bill tabled be withdrawn by consent, and that the government table the bill apparently before us, which appears to be based on the different fraction. I think the minister owes an explanation to the House as to why the 50-20 split was in the original bill tabled yesterday and why there is a difference in those figures today. Was this a change of heart, or was it a typographical error? Had the government reconsidered the unreasonableness of the 50-20 formula and thought perhaps that 30-15 was more reasonable? I think the minister owes us some explanation.

● (2040)

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) for his helpful suggestion on how to proceed in this particular case. As far as an explanation is concerned, I cannot give one as to the substance of exactly what happened, but I will make inquiries about the other part and inform the House and my friend how the mistake could have occurred. However, I can tell the hon. member that we started by tabling a draft bill last June or July and the numbers used were 50 for the House of Commons and 20 for the Senate. No representations were received. The same numbers were put in Bill C-94.

However, subsequently I received representations, particularly from my own caucus and from members of the Senate, to the effect that the numbers appeared high. Lower numbers were suggested so that any opposition party in the House, as it stands today, could put forward a negative resolution, and to make sure to have a low enough number for the Senate so the opposition in the Senate would be in a position to put forward a negative resolution. On the basis of these representations and this advice, the government decided to cut down the numbers proposed in Bill C-94 to 30 and 15, instead of the 50 and 20 as originally suggested. In terms of substance, this is the explanation.

The instructions given to the draftsmen were to replace the numbers by the numbers that appear in Bill C-102. I will inquire why the bill that was tabled for first reading did not have those numbers in it. If it is agreeable to the House, I will be very happy to replace the text tabled yesterday by the text that appears in Bill C-102 with the proper figures of 30 and