

*Government Orders*

As we know this process is to send the whole issue of redistribution to a committee. That was proposed by the minister. That was spoken to very eloquently by the hon. parliamentary secretary and spoken to, I might add, in general terms very eloquently by members of the opposition.

I am not a believer in curbing the committee with caps, restraints or limitations. I believe we should let the committee decide what is appropriate after it has heard from people on the issues involved. I trust the hon. member who has just spoken will be a member of the committee. Her views on the issue are very attractive to me. It may be that considerations will come forward that will modify her views or mine as the case may be. I do not believe we should be setting limits on the committee and attempting to determine the outcome of its deliberations before it actually meets to consider the issue of redistribution.

I do not wish to take any more time, except to say that the concept of cutting back on the number of seats in the House of Commons or the concept of cutting back on the number of elected representatives in the provincial legislatures is extremely attractive. Only if we start making these bodies more effective can we make individual members more effective parliamentarians and representatives of their constituencies.

Therefore I applaud the thrust of the argument of the previous two speakers. I am attracted to it. I am quite willing to say that while they may be on the other side of the House they have met a very responsive chord on the government benches, as indeed they know full well frequently happens. We wish to incorporate their views on the issue of redistribution and on the issue of how many seats there should be.

My final point, again in agreement with the hon. member, is that when she stated there should be proper representation across the country based upon population she was dead right. We can make the odd exception. We have always made an exception for P.E.I., but that is the exception that should prove the rule. The rule is rep by pop. The general rule, given the limitations of large areas of the country with very few people and making allowances here and there for special circumstances, is rep by pop.

Therefore I do not see the approach of turning over the boundary commission proposals to a committee of the House to be anything in the nature of taking something away from a province. For instance, my hon. colleague from Ontario is listening to me at the moment. I do not think our proposal is to take four seats away from Ontario which would otherwise occur. I do not think our proposal is to take two seats away from British Columbia. It is a question of saying that we have reached the point where the House will have over 300 seats and it is now time to do something about it.

Mr. Pearson was probably right in the sixties, some 30 years ago, to set up this type of system. However it has ground on remorselessly giving the House more and more members and it is now time for us to call a halt to automatic mechanisms that simply churn out more expense for the public and perhaps reduce the efficiency of the House. That is why I am happy to support the government's approach in this regard and to commend hon. members on their speeches.

• (1155)

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I follow on the heels of the Minister of National Revenue who pointed out that there were some advantages in the proposals made by members of our party. I appreciate his candour, his openness and his willingness to enter into a spirit of non-partisanship on something as important as this matter.

There is no question the cost of government is ever increasing. The only way we can put a halt to it is through attrition. We should not increase the size of the House. The committee should be given direction. All we are asking in our amendment is for the committee to be given enough direction or encouragement to consider the possible downsizing of the House of Commons and to consider the possible freezing or setting of the cap at 295 for the House of Commons, as we are presently designed now.

All we are asking in our amendment is that these points be made to the committee for its consideration. If after due deliberation the committee comes back and says in the spirit and principle of rep by pop or in the spirit and principle of the act of Confederation that it must continue its present course, so be it.

We happen to believe the committee should be given the opportunity, the authority and the right to come back to the House with a report reflecting and including representation by population and the fact, as the member for Calgary North pointed out, that increasing the size of the House does not necessarily mean it will perform any better.

We have a government, a cabinet and what we call backbenchers. Backbenchers are usually assigned to various committees. They select the various chairmen of committees. Sometimes cabinet gives good leadership and cabinet ministers give those corresponding committees direction, responsibility and duties. However that is in the minority.

In the majority of cases cabinet ministers give no direction to their subcommittees or their committees, give no follow up to those committees and give token appearances to the committees. Sooner or later during the course of the Parliament they lose interest and know they are there to vote on a partisan basis.

In return for the support of the Minister of National Revenue on this issue I would commend about four or five cabinet ministers of the government who have given their various committees direction, who have given them some authority to report back and get the feel and the will of the people. I believe