

*Representation Act, 1985*

them that every constituency in Canada is unique in its size, population, travel route or whatever. I am not persuaded, however, by the last speaker who said that if he had more representation he would be able to give better representation to the province of Quebec. The Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) talked about northern Manitoba and northern Ontario, claiming that greater representation in numbers would lead to better representation. I would submit that a fundamental question is being lost in the debate. What Members of Parliament ought to be considering is not how many of us there are or whether or not we should grow every 10 years according to the census, but rather what is the appropriate size for the best decision making?

The course we have followed in the history of the Parliament of Canada is that after every census the size of the House of Commons becomes larger. I am one who believes that that route will ultimately destroy Parliament. It means that we will have more and more government by Cabinet and less and less government persuaded by parliamentarians who are private Members. By increasing the size of the House of Commons, we do not increase the length of the day or the week and, therefore, each Hon. Member's opportunity to participate in questions or in speeches is diminished. If we add more Members on the basis that more Members give better representation, I think we deceive ourselves and denude Parliament. Each Member has less opportunity, not more. What our regions, districts and constituencies need is effective, powerful Members who can come here and have a fair chance to do their work.

● (1250)

We have heard today about the difficulties involved in big constituencies. No one knows those difficulties more than I do. My riding is 220 miles by 180 miles and contains 113 individual communities. I run the wheels off a vehicle every two years. But I would not give up that constituency for one in the City of Toronto which is six blocks by 10 blocks. The reason is the stability of the population in a rural ranching riding. When a rancher and his wife retire, their sons and daughters take over. That is stability. As well, urban constituencies have to take ethnic considerations into account. I know of one constituency which has to have translation facilities in order to communicate with some 13 different ethnic groups. Therefore, the first principle we need to accept is that every riding is unique. To say that we need a larger House of Commons is the wrong way to go because I do not believe it leads to better representation. What we as Members of Parliament need is a budget which will allow us to serve us the ethnic needs, if that is the problem in the riding; transportation costs, when that is the problem in the riding; or translation services, if that is the problem, whatever the case might be.

I sat beside the Hon. Member from Mississauga one day when he was signing books and books of certificates for new Canadians. What amazed me was that he finished signing just one book of these certificates and I realized that that was the number I would do in my constituency in a year. This reflects the uniqueness of all the different constituencies. Therefore,

for someone to stand up and claim that our ridings are unique and therefore we need more Members is a claim that falls on deaf ears. What we need is to have a Member manage his budget in a way which will be most helpful in allowing him to represent effectively the people who elected him. He must be accountable for that money. The record of how the money is spent should be published three or four times a year so that constituents can determine whether or not their Member is spending public funds in a worth while and worthy manner.

In conclusion, I believe the House of Commons is probably already too large and the optimum size should be somewhat smaller. To anyone from the other side of the House wants to volunteer to give up his or her seat I would say that a smaller Parliament would lead to more effective debate, a stronger Parliament and less domination by Cabinet, because each of us would be more effective rather than less, as is the case, I believe very strongly, in Great Britain. There are some 600 Members there who pack the House of Commons so tightly that they all cannot sit in the House at the same time. They do not stand in their place for votes, they file by the Speaker as they leave the Chamber saying yea or nay. Bigger does not mean better. What we really want to do is to make each individual Member more effective. We cannot use the argument of individual uniqueness for increasing the representation in the House because every Member could make that case.

**Mr. David Berger (Laurier):** Mr. Speaker, there are many ironies in politics, many things which are very ironic about the actions of this Government, but this Bill has to represent one of the greatest ironies. In the last election the Conservative Party proposed to give a voice to western Canada. With this Bill it is taking away seats and taking away that voice from western Canada.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Read the Bill, David. You might come to the opposite conclusion.

**Mr. Berger:** Over the last four or five years, and even longer, we have heard about western alienation. We know that many western separatist movements were started. We know, of course, of the battles waged by the western Premiers to have their interests represented in national decisions. The basis of all these complaints is power. Even today with this Tory Government and its strong representation from western Canada, people in the West complain that decisions are made according to the interests of central Canada. One has just to look at the arithmetic. In the current Parliament there are 282 seats with some 75 seats in Quebec and 95 in Ontario for a total of 170. It does not take a genius to figure out that the Conservative Party at present has much greater representation in Ontario and Quebec and that it can make decisions in the interests of these two provinces and really ignore the rest of the country.

Under the current legislation, passed by a Liberal Government, Alberta would have some 27 seats in the next election. Under the Bill proposed today by the Conservative Party, moved by the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn), Alberta will only have 25 seats. British Columbia would