

HOUSE OF COMMONS

REDISTRIBUTION OF RIDINGS—SUGGESTED AMENDMENT OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT TO MAINTAIN PRESENT LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP IN CERTAIN PROVINCES

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It has to do with the redistribution that is now being considered by committees which I understand are meeting in the various provinces. In view of the fact that several provinces—Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—will be losing membership unless there is an amendment to the British North America Act, has consideration been given by the government to bringing in an address to the end that membership in these various provinces will not fall below the present level and to achieve that either by a directive or by increasing the size of the membership in the House as I believe was done in the forties?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, some thought has been given within the government to such a matter. I would be prepared to pursue that thought. I feel that unless the legislation or the amendment were retroactive it would probably be impossible to do anything about the electoral reform action which is now in process. But I will look into that aspect of the matter, too. I do know that this is an important problem for many provinces in Canada. It does involve an amendment to the British North America Act, and that is no easy undertaking.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I thank the Prime Minister. Now I should like, in a supplementary, to refer particularly to the position of Saskatchewan and Manitoba whose rural areas are being depopulated. Both provinces are to lose members. Knowing of the Prime Minister's interest in the west I wonder whether he would look into this question particularly to the end that depopulation will not result in members having to represent constituencies so large as to make it virtually impossible for them to do so.

Mr. Trudeau: The right hon. gentleman must not forget that my interest in the west is paired with interest in other parts of the country and that redistribution does have an effect on other provinces than those in the west. Some provinces, as he will know, are protected by the provision relating to Senate seats, when a decline in population would otherwise affect them adversely.

An hon. Member: Let the Senate deal with that.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member may ask a supplementary if he wishes. The only solution which can be envisaged, therefore, is one of enlarging considerably the membership of the House. We would also have to consult the architects about that aspect.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Prime Minister certainly realizes that the provision respecting Senate membership does not help us at all.

Mr. Trudeau: As Canadians or as Saskatchewan?

Oral Questions

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Can the Prime Minister tell us what the target date is for establishing the new electoral boundaries?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will realize he is now asking the Prime Minister to give an opinion on a matter of law. I do not think a question in those terms is in order.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INQUIRY AS TO INCOME TAX REDUCTION TO CREATE JOBS AND PRESENTATION OF PROGRAM FOR STIMULATION TO PROVINCIAL FINANCE MINISTERS

Mr. Joe Hueglin (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, may I address my question to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister tell the House, as urged by the president of the Canadian Labour Congress yesterday, whether the government intends to introduce a substantial reduction in personal income taxes as a major means of creating more jobs at the present time?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): I shall certainly take seriously the hon. gentleman's representation.

Mr. Hueglin: Can the minister tell us whether he will be outlining a specific and comprehensive economic program at the meeting with the finance ministers of the provinces in order to stimulate the economy in co-ordination with them?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The discussion at those meetings next week will be very comprehensive.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough West.

Mr. Harney: I defer to my hon. friend from Lakeshore.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON PAYMENT OF GRANTS TO COMPANIES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of the fact that, according to statistics released by his department yesterday, as of the end of November 811 firms or only 37.5 per cent of those that have been offered and have accepted DREE grants since the inception of this program have actually received partial payment, will the minister undertake to make a statement on motions in the near future explaining why such a small number have actually received funds and begun projects compared with the very substantially larger number of firms his department has announced to the press and Members of Parliament would actually receive them?