

Newfoundland

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak briefly concerning only two matters which arise from the bill now before us. It has been said by a number of hon. members who have already spoken that as Canadians we must do our best to extend the warmest possible welcome to the people of Newfoundland as they enter confederation.

One of the consequences of confederation will be the coming to this city and to parliament of seven members of the House of Commons and six members of the other place. The question I raise, and which I hope is being considered by the government, is this: What sort of welcome will it be for these thirteen new members of the Canadian parliament if, upon arriving here, they find they have no office space? I suggest strongly that this is a matter which should receive the serious consideration of the government, and I suggest further it would not be out of place for the government to indicate to parliament whether or not such consideration is being given, and if so, along what lines.

This matter has been taken up on many occasions both in the house and with officials of the house, not only because of the coming to parliament of representatives of Newfoundland, but because of the overcrowding already existing, and because of the increase in membership provided by redistribution.

Mr. Probe: Put the senators in the new printing bureau.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. friend suggests that the senators' offices might be moved to the printing bureau. To say the least, space might be found in the east block for members of the other place; they would be somewhat closer to the Chateau Laurier. But speaking seriously, this is a matter that does require consideration.

I could make a case for the greater space needed for members on the opposition side of the house. Were I to do so, it might be regarded as a case of self-interest. May I add however that it seems to me to be unfair and poor business when so many parliamentary assistants, who have certain extra duties as a result of their appointments, find themselves crowded in the matter of office space.

I urge the government to give consideration to this matter, particularly because of the way in which the problem will be aggravated when these new members come from the province of Newfoundland. I would ask the government to do the fair thing and to tell us, either from the floor of the house or informally, what ideas they have, and to indicate whether or not progress is being made toward implementing those ideas.

[Mr. Church.]

If the government wishes to have my suggestion, then I have already made it, namely, that space be found in the east block for the offices of a number of senators, including those we now have and the new ones who may be appointed within the next few months, and that members of the House of Commons be permitted to move into some of the offices thus vacated. As a matter of fact, in the light of the number of vacancies in the other place at this time, it seems to me only fair that this working section of parliament should be entitled to some of the vacant space on the other side of the building.

Mr. Graydon: The government will not need much space after this.

Mr. Fraser: The C.C.F. want to go into the red.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. friend's remarks are understandable. They are the observations one would expect to be made the morning after the night before.

Mr. Graydon: What a day!

Mr. Knowles: I move on to say a word about the other matter I mentioned at the opening of my remarks. It has been touched upon by the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Church), although I must confess I was not able to hear his remarks well enough to get clearly the point he was making.

I too am concerned about the relationship between the measure now before us and chapter 80 of the statutes of 1947, an act to incorporate Quebec, North Shore and Labrador Railway Company. I understood the hon. member for Broadview to point out that there had been inserted in that act a saving clause as set out in section 7 to the effect that all the things parliament was permitting this company to do should be done only up to the border of Labrador, and that from that point on, permission would have to be secured from Newfoundland. The reference is not to the government of Newfoundland, to the provincial government of Newfoundland or to any government in the future. I raise the question as to what now happens when Newfoundland becomes a province of Canada. My point is of particular concern in view of the fact that section 20 of the Quebec, North Shore and Labrador Railway Act says that—

The works and undertakings of the company are hereby declared to be for the general advantage of Canada.

We all recall the arguments in the house at the time this bill was before us. Hon. members will have in mind our opposition, lest this act be made a means whereby private interests would have the opportunity to exploit a great natural resource in the north-eastern section of this continent, a resource