

The Apportionment Bill.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JOSEPH R. KNOWLAND,

OF CALIFORNIA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Thursday, February 9, 1911.

On the bill (H. R. 30566) for the apportionment of Representatives in Congress among the several States under the Thirteenth Decennial Census.

Mr. KNOWLAND said:

Mr. SPEAKER: It will be generally conceded, I think, that no voice would have been raised to-day in advocacy of a plan to increase by 42 the membership of the House of Representatives had the Thirteenth Decennial Census failed to show that the States of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin would lose congressional seats should the ratio of division be fixed so as to maintain the present House membership of 391. Of the 16 members of the Committee on the Census 10 are from States that would lose representation should the present membership be maintained.

I am strongly opposed on broad grounds to increasing the size of the present House. We all realize that it is now so large and unwieldy as to seriously interfere with the proper consideration of public business and the addition of 42 Members, as proposed by the Census Committee, will but accentuate the present difficulties. The time is at hand when a halt must be called, if we would preserve the dignity and reputation of the National House of Representatives. If we are to add each decade a sufficient number of Representatives to protect those States whose population is dwindling we will cause the House to become so unwieldy as to prevent it from performing its constitutional functions. Has the hour not arrived that calls for the display of a broad statesmanship that will eliminate entirely from consideration the selfish interests of any State?

While an attempt is made in the pending bill to prevent future increases of membership such as the committee now proposes, it is not improbable that following the next decennial census the same selfish considerations will control, and that apportionments which this bill attempts to leave to the recommendations of future Secretaries of Commerce and Labor will, beginning in 1921, be taken out of the hands of that official and made by Congress in order to prevent States from losing seats in this body. I fail to see the consistency of recommending a policy for the future the arguments in favor of which appeal with practically equal force in determining the membership of the House under the present census.

It is cited that the membership of many other great parliamentary bodies of the world is larger than that of the present American House of Representatives. It is true that the German Reichstag has a membership of 396, the Spanish Congress a membership of 406, the Russian Duma a membership of 442, the Italian Chamber of Deputies 508, the Austrian House of Commons 516, the French Chamber of Deputies 591, and the

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It is cited that the membership of many other great parliamentary bodies of the world is larger than that of the present American House of Representatives. It is true that the German Reichstag has a membership of 396, the Spanish Congress a membership of 406, the Russian Duma a membership of 442, the Italian Chamber of Deputies 508, the Austrian House of Commons 516, the French Chamber of Deputies 594, and the British House of Commons 670. It must be borne in mind, however, that in the House of Commons 40 members constitute a quorum for the transaction of general business and 20 for the consideration of private bills. Seats are only provided, as has already been stated, for about one-quarter of the membership. What is true of the House of Commons is likewise true of some of the other large legislative bodies. We can not transact business in this House unless we have present a majority of all Members; or if in Committee of the Whole House, 100 Members.

The cost of adding 42 Members is certainly worthy of some consideration. The salaries would amount annually to \$315,000; mileage (estimated), \$35,000; clerk hire, \$63,000; stationery account, \$5,250; franking privilege (estimated), \$250,000; a total of \$668,250. Now, to this must be added other expenses, including the addition of a new story to the House Office Building at an enormous cost. Practically all the space in that building is now occupied, and to take care of 42 new Members would necessitate its enlargement. With the ratio for division 232,840 of population for each congressional district, the figure at which the present House membership will be retained, no Member will represent too large a constituency. Many of us now represent larger districts, my own now containing a population of 305,364. Many other Members successfully represent even larger districts.

In fixing the ratio for division at 232,840, no State in the Union will be treated unjustly. They are all accorded equal representation in proportion to population. Actuated by a desire that this House remain a deliberative body, I shall not vote to increase its present membership.