

Government Orders

perhaps by a minimum number of seats in the Senate or by some other method.

I firmly believe that the House should be elected on the basis of representation by population. I have always been a believer in that principle. I stick by it.

There are conflicts of principles now and again in the way we do things. The hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster in his speech referred to the principle of representation by population. I am a firm believer in it and so is the hon. member in his heart of hearts. I know he does not like the minimums that are already there. I do not either. I would prefer to see those changed.

I recognize there are certain political realities in Canada by which we have to abide. I am not anxious to engage in changes to those realities without an overall view of how the Constitution could be changed in various ways.

The Charlottetown accord was an attempt to do that. The hon. member opposed it. I supported it with some reluctance. I did not like parts of it. However in it was the 25 per cent minimum. I supported Charlottetown. I am prepared to support Charlottetown again if I have to. I would prefer not to. I would prefer a better deal. I think we can get a better deal some day.

We are not into Constitution making now. Canadians are fed up with Constitution making. In my view we ought not to be engaging in it here in a roundabout way, as the hon. member suggests, and which I suggest is illegal.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member for Kingston and the Islands respond to the hon. member for Bellechasse he was arguing for and against himself. He reiterated what I said in my speech.

He alluded a bit to some constitutional changes that would be necessary if we were to reduce the number of members in the House. We discussed this in committee. As the member for Calgary West very adequately explained to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, any constitutional changes would be minimal and could be done within the confines of the House. They do not require the very complicated and difficult amending formula to authorize the changes. It would be necessary to deal with the grandfather clause which prohibits an equitable reduction in the size of the House.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre, who had some input at committee in the bill, used California as an example of a jurisdiction in the United States with a population equal to the population of our entire country which at the federal level only has, if I remember correctly, 56 federal members to represent nearly 30 million people.

His argument that we need 294 MPs at the federal level to adequately administer this country does not hold water. Both our

system and our capabilities are equal or perhaps superior to those of the politicians in the state of California.

I have a concern the hon. member did not address and to which I would like him to respond. We have thrown away \$5 million. We are going to draw new maps after the bill is passed. Given the population shift in the province of Ontario, I am quite sure that the results may be very similar to the results we saw when the maps came out in the former process. In those maps northern Ontario lost one seat. Perhaps now with the population changes it will lose two seats and the hon. member for Cochrane—Superior will have a larger riding and another member will not have a riding at all.

How is the hon. member's government going to respond when the maps come out again? The results could be even less favourable to his members than they were this past time. Will they again demand changes? Is the government going to again delay the process and bring in new legislation to try to get the maps drawn the way those members want them?

• (1725)

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made some pretty far-reaching assertions in the course of his remarks. I want to go back to the California example he cited, although he did not specifically ask me a question on it.

He suggested that because in California members of the house of representatives represent huge numbers of people that we should do the same. I do not agree that the American experience is one that we necessarily need to follow. We have never done so in the past on major political matters. I do not know why we would today.

The hon. member, in reflecting on this issue, would agree with me that the American political experience has not been all roses either. He points to the parts of it he likes and says this is what we should do. However he ignores the disadvantages that their system affords, which are significant.

Canadians do not expect their members of Parliament to represent huge numbers of people. They feel they are well represented now with a House of reasonable size. Based on population we have always had a fairly large House compared to the United States and I am sure we are going to continue to have for the foreseeable future.

The second part of his question was about the proposals we have here and if the commissions are coming up with new maps are we going to throw those out a second time. I do not think so. I have no reason to believe that would be the case.

However, the member should bear in mind that in dealing with these maps the government is not throwing them out. The commissions will be free to use them as one of the three they put forward for public consideration should they decide to do so. They do not have to redraw every line on every map. This may be one of the three sets they have to do but I remind the hon.