

*Government Orders*

Other countries operate reasonably successfully with much higher populations per member than Canada. Australia is one of them with actually double the population per member in its House.

● (1540)

We have a lot of things to consider. If we are going to review legislation which is 30 years old, at least it is appropriate that we do it now if it has not been done in the past. As has been mentioned, it may be that it has outlived its usefulness and we have to reconsider what will be done in the future.

In terms of the argument my friends in the Reform Party put forward about time allocation, I would like to point out the reality to them. I do not think it is the intention of any government to impose time allocation for frivolous reasons.

Hearings were scheduled to begin in April on this proposal by the commission. We are now going into a recess for two weeks. I am not sure what the Reform Party would have preferred to do, whether it would have preferred to stay and debate this for another couple of weeks. We could have filibustered. However there is plenty of time in the time allocated to put the points of view across and make sure all of the arguments are on the table.

I am sure the Reform Party is as interested in the reform of this process as the rest of us. I do not think any hon. members would disagree with the fact that it is time for a change. We cannot go on filling up the House especially if we have a few guys my size. If we went on without any changes we would be forced to knock out the back walls, or put another row in the front, or only elect lean people.

I enthusiastically support this thrust. The time has come for change. The time has come to reconsider how the people of Canada are represented. The time has come to listen to those people and give them time to bring their views forward so we can truly represent the people of this country.

**Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against Bill C-18, an act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. I do that with some mixed feelings.

My own riding is disappearing in this change which is going to take place across Canada and very significantly in the province of Ontario. There has been only one call into my office regarding this change and perhaps that is because they were anticipating going to the hearings, as I was. However I anticipate receiving many calls when the people in my riding discover what is taking place in this House.

In no way was this a burning issue with the people in this country. There are far more important issues we should be dealing with. While I say I had mixed feelings about what was happening in the riding I represent, I was looking forward to

making a representation at the hearings. We would have an opportunity to make representations again when the reports came back into this House.

In looking at the changes I realized there were some winners and some losers. There are going to be winners and losers no matter where this comes out. We will not come up with a plan that will please everyone. That just is not possible. There is no evidence in this bill that will approach anything near that.

There is the suggestion that politicians will be able to do a better job than Elections Canada. That is a leap of faith most Canadians would have a difficult time making. Our track record in the past has not been one of doing a better job.

● (1545)

The decision was made 30 years ago to take this process out of the political arena. That was a good decision that was made back then. I think it is even more appropriate today, given the mood of the Canadian voter.

We just have to reflect back to October 1992 at which time politics in the country took a dramatic turn for the better. The Canadian people said back then that they were no longer going to be led by the political parties. They were going to have a say in what was going on in the country. They sent out that very clear message.

That message can be ignored in the House at our peril. The former government ignored the message that was given to it by Meech Lake. The former government ignored the message that was relayed to it through the Spicer commission at a cost of some \$27 million in taxpayers' dollars. The government was told what the priorities of the Canadian people were and that the Constitution was not number one. In spite of that the government ignored it, went on with its own agenda and suffered its fate in the last election.

The mood of the Canadian people that was evident in 1992 and 1993 is still there. They want to be heard. They want to have their say. The process we are about to embark on will be a denial of that.

We are not talking about process today. We are talking about product. We knew this was coming down the pike some time ago, but nothing happened until the proposed boundary changes hit our desks and hit the public. All of a sudden it became an issue. There was no secret about what was happening. It is not about the process. It is about the product and it is about self-interest: my fiefdom and what is going to happen to me. I think that is wrong.

The issue is not new. It has been there but it is in the forefront now because some people's ridings will be affected by it. The government is going to circumvent the public hearings that were to take place so that the public could have input into the process.