

work, and that their abolition would mean the loss of \$3.5 to \$4 million worth of work.

His amendment would mean an even greater loss, and if we decided at some point to abandon what has been done, we would have wasted \$3 to \$4 million.

That is why we cannot support the amendments proposed this morning.

Motion No. 3 is the logical continuation of Motion No. 2 which would maintain the existing commissions.

For these reasons, we cannot support the amendments proposed this morning.

[English]

Mr. Hermanson: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Statements were attributed to me that are not correct. Prior to the introduction of the bill there was a discussion on whether an 18 month period was the proper time for suspension of the bill. In fact my party and I recommended that it be either 12 months or 24 months.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): With all due respect to the hon. member, I believe that is a point of debate rather than a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): I would like to comment on the three motions before us which were grouped by the Chair.

First of all, I was a bit surprised by the remarks of my colleague from Kindersley—Lloydminster about the Official Opposition's attitude. Once again, we have heard expressions that will be used more and more in the House, as the elections and referendum grow nearer in Quebec. We have heard terms like the breakup of Canada, separatism, that kind of language. I do not see what that has to do with Bill C-18 and I do not know what the member from Kindersley—Lloydminster is getting at. He probably does not know himself.

As for Bill C-18 and the amendments proposed today, the authors of the three motions did raise some good points. In fact, we could speak of two motions, since the third one is just a consequence of the second one.

The main thing that comes out of these motions and the whole debate and what prompts my first comment is that we are considering limiting the number of members in the House. It may be a worthwhile, even noble objective. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Quebec governments, even the least nationalistic ones, have always insisted on a clause guaranteeing 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons to Quebec.

• (1035)

Under the present federal system, Quebec is guaranteed this representation. Assuming it remains in the federation, some-

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thing which is also hypothetical, then Quebec should retain one quarter of the seats in Parliament. Limit the number of seats, by all means, but only after giving Quebec assurances that it will retain its current level of 25 per cent representation in the House of Commons.

Mention was also made in earlier debates of the need for a thorough review of a number of provisions, notably section 51 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and of the possibility that some areas or regions of the countries, in particular the Magdalen Islands and the riding of Labrador, could be considered separately. These ridings could be exempted from the process of determining electoral boundaries on the basis of the number of voters in a province. Thus, other ridings either in the province of Newfoundland or in Labrador, as far as the riding of Labrador and the population of the Quebec mainland is concerned, would not have to make up for the fact that Labrador or the Magdalen Islands would be designated as separate ridings. As you know, until 1968, the Magdalen Islands constituted a separate riding.

With respect to the suspension period which the first motion presented by my hon. colleague for Kindersley—Lloydminster seeks to shorten to 12 months, without of course abolishing the commissions, I fail to see the logic of this motion. If we truly want to do a thorough job and review the entire process which has resulted in periodic readjustments to the electoral map, a process which has not been thoroughly reviewed and closely scrutinized since 1964, then a twelve-month suspension of operations seems clearly inadequate. We would be hamstrung by this provision. To all intents and purposes, we would be better off not passing Bill C-18 instead of limiting ourselves to a twelve-month suspension.

In order to undertake a thorough review, we need the 24 month suspension provided for in the bill. Therefore, I cannot support the proposed amendment, any more than I can support maintaining the current commissions in operation. What work would there be for them to do? Again, we would have a case where commissions would be paid to do nothing. We do not need this. Enough money is being wasted already.

All the same, it is somewhat astonishing to hear a Reform Party member say that he wants to continue wasting public funds. We do not need this. If we have to suspend the process, then let us do it. In two years' time, when the review process is undertaken again, other persons can be appointed. We could reappoint the same persons. Some may have changed careers or even passed away. We will have to adjust accordingly.

Why should we artificially maintain the commissions? Rather, we should establish new ones at the appropriate time, that is, within the 60 day period set out in clause 4 of Bill C-18. There is no reason for us to keep the commissions going, unless the hon. members of the Reform Party have friends on the commissions whom they want to protect. Well if this is the case, then they should say so clearly. But if it is not the case, we have no need of commissions that do not work.