

Government Orders

The third major reason was that Bonavista—Trinity—Conception as it was then comprised pre-1988 only had a population of around 75,000 or 76,000 whereas Gander—Grand Falls or Gander—Twillingate as it was then called had more than Bonavista—Trinity—Conception. It was felt that including the upper half of the northern half of Bonavista Bay would balance it more reasonably with other ridings in Newfoundland.

Considerable debate took place and the changes were eventually made. My constituents understood all the rationale that was used. After only one election the same rationale that was used to result in the present boundaries is being applied to revert to the old boundaries, except the rationale is used in reverse. It is said that the alignment of the northern part of Bonavista Bay is not in with the southern part of Bonavista Bay and the five or six communities that had an alignment more with the urban thinking of St. John's East really should belong to the district of Port de Grave because that really should belong to Bonavista—Trinity—Conception.

This is very difficult to understand for constituents who are only now getting used to a change that was made six years ago. Now they are being told that within two months they have to appear in four different locations in the riding either to agree or disagree, and the ones who disagree have to give some rationale why they disagree. That is very hard to understand.

What is also very hard to understand is that the population of Newfoundland from 1981 to 1991 had an increase of 793 people in 10 years. For this we are to realign what was realigned before, just take the rationale and use it in reverse. We will have 36 hearings in Atlantic Canada for 32 seats. That is about one per seat, except in Newfoundland where we have seven seats and there we will be 15 hearings. I am not sure what rationale was used there. I would not want to speculate for the members of the House.

The point I am making is that the changes that were made in 1987-88 were quite acceptable. The total population of the riding has not changed. The population of centres in the riding has not changed. People have not realigned themselves to my knowledge, so that has not changed. Why all of a sudden do three commissioners draw lines and find some rationale for those lines? I do not understand it.

• (1745)

What is more important is my constituents. Not only do they not understand it and have difficulties with it, but they are saying to me: "You are going up to preach restraint, you are going up to lower the deficit, you are going up to balance the budget. How can you possibly, apart from the ridiculousness and the timing of this measure, support it from the viewpoint of expenditure?"

I come up failing, Mr. Speaker. I cannot answer their questions.

Not an old but a wise mentor of mine once told me: "You know, Fred, being in politics is very simple; if you can't explain it, you really should not be doing it."

Well, I cannot explain this, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I am not so sure we should be doing it. Because of that, I am a very strong supporter of this bill to delay this ludicrous action that is taking place, so we can refer it to a committee, study it and come up with some reasonable recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before resuming debate I will take a moment to make a comment to an earlier intervention by the member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception on a point of order concerning relevance.

Some of his colleagues who shall remain unnamed from his great province would be the masters I might say of making a discourse on how it might be relevant. But it always amazes me in the short five years that I have been here that members always are able to make a relevant point to the motion or the bill being debated, and certainly I appreciate the member's participation in today's debate and his relevance to the subject matter.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I will try to find a germ of relevance in my representation as well.

I have listened with a great deal of interest to this debate today. We are talking about closure, redistribution and political interference or non-political interference in the political process in Canada. That is one of the things that we can treasure.

When we look at other countries in the world and reflect on the tragedy that happened in Mexico yesterday, we think of the very real and very great political discourse that goes on in the country. We see our colleagues from the Bloc who are here and while we are at completely different poles we are able to discuss these things rationally and without fear of personal harm. That is something we really need to treasure in our country and to hold very dear. I guess that is one of the reasons that I wanted to speak to this motion.

When this bill was first introduced I really did not feel all that strongly about it. My riding of Edmonton Southwest is affected very little. We lose a little bit to the northwest but as members would know, Edmonton Northwest is represented by my colleague who shares the same last name. So we do not win or lose on that one. In the south we lose a little bit and we gain a little bit so that the effect on our constituency is not all that much.

What we do have is a sense of fairness that when we get into a political debate or into an election here in Canada most of us do not have to go to bed at night thinking that there has been any gerrymandering going on with our electoral boundaries. This is something that I think is particularly important.