

Government Orders

I suggest to the House that regardless of where the boundaries are drawn, the member will not get re-elected because she is not listening to the Canadian voter.

Members talk about the number of voters and how they can represent only a certain number of voters. The boundaries can be adjusted to reduce the members of Parliament. I am not saying we have to stay with the same boundary lines. Changes can be made to accommodate shifts in the population. I used the example of Australia where it has double the voters. The United States has five times what we have here and it is not having any real problems. The argument for quantity just does not wash. Quality is what we need here, not quantity. More is not better.

Mrs. Ablonczy: More people for the Prime Minister to threaten.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): More people for the Prime Minister to whip into line, to do as they are told, to not represent the people in their ridings.

Let us get away from this charade. We are talking about doing something that is demanded by the voters and not something that is going to ensure the re-election of the people on the other side.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will give you a perfect example that backbenchers are still allowed to speak in the House.

I listened with interest to the hon. member for Simcoe Centre. When I listen to the Reform Party I come to one conclusion: simple solutions for complex problems. I too have some concern about this bill. When I went back and studied it, I discovered that there was an agreement with the provinces in 1985 which would have to be broken to address the concerns of some, mine included. I had an idea that we could freeze the numbers in the House.

However, it really requires addressing the constitutional agreement that existed at that time. The member has not talked about how he is going to address that problem, how he is going to go to the provinces and get an agreement with the provinces to reduce the numbers.

The formula would require major changes to address the concept of representation by population. It would require major reductions in both the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Manitoba. If my memory serves me correctly, the province of Saskatchewan would lose about four seats.

I do not hear members of the Reform Party from Saskatchewan standing up saying they are prepared to sustain a loss of four seats

in the province of Saskatchewan. Let us be honest and clear about these things. They should tell us how they are going to reduce those numbers of seats and if they are prepared to lose four seats in the province of Saskatchewan. They should also tell us the magic solution they have to go back to the provinces and retrench that agreement that existed in 1985.

• (1150)

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the questions from the member. I want to start out with his first comment, simple solutions.

I suggest that the solutions are simple. What is lacking on the part of the government is the guts to do what is right.

There is nothing complex about the problems in the country today. What is desperately lacking is the courage and the guts it is going to take to do what is right and bring some fiscal sanity to the country.

I should take a moment to applaud the member. He is one of the few who had the courage to stand up and buck the party line last night. He had the courage to stand up and represent the people in his riding and I applaud him for that.

I will take him to task though for not watching his TV set and knowing that last night the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster said he has no problem with the reduction in the seats in Saskatchewan. It is not all about what is in it for me. He is looking at what is good for the country as a whole. We did put our money where our mouth is. Nobody hedged on that. The member stood up in the House last night and said yes, we will have to share the hurt right across the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I listen to the member for Simcoe Centre, I see that we are talking about the electoral map as opposed to a reduction in the number of seats. I see that the words or comments used approximate those of the Bloc. There are too many members and too much government. The country is over-governed and on the verge of bankruptcy. Running the country has become too costly and the government should be more efficient and less cumbersome. The number of seats should be trimmed by 10 per cent.

For our part, we are merely offering to eliminate 75 seats in one fell swoop. Could it be that they are finally beginning to understand our position and that they will soon be supporting us?