

Government Orders

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard right, but I thought the hon. member would come back with different comments and maybe undo what he said in the first place. He said that the cost of sending MPs here was very high, with which I agree, and that we did not need to increase the cost and increase the number of MPs in the House.

I am surprised because the thrust of the bill will permit western Canadians to have adequate representation here as far as numbers are concerned. I do not agree with the member from western Canada who wants to eliminate the possibility of westerners having more MPs and more representation in the House.

Mr. Gouk: Madam Speaker, I can see where this is a very complicated matter for the hon. member, particularly when the Minister of Justice says that he does not like mathematics. I guess it has affected the whole party.

The answer is that we do not always have to adjust upward. We can also adjust downward. We are not saying there should not be regional balance. We are saying we should adjust the numbers from province to province so that there is always equal representation, but it does not have to be done by adding to the cost.

• (1055)

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I begin my speech today on Bill C-69 by issuing a challenge to Liberal members opposite to go back to their ridings this weekend, grab a piece of paper, a pen and a clipboard, and walk down the street asking their constituents if they think we need more politicians in Ottawa. They should not be surprised if they hear responses like are you joking, absolutely not, no way, get real, and a few expletives that I cannot say in the House.

The issue that we are debating today is quite simple: the need for more politicians in the House of Commons or the lack of need for more politicians in the House of Commons. The Liberal government wants to increase the size of the House of Commons from 295 members to 301 by the next election. Reformers would like to see the House reduced from 295 members and the rate of future growth reduced to 265 or less.

This is the direction Canadians want Ottawa to take: less government, less regulation, less bureaucracy and fewer politicians. We only have to look at how successful the Harris campaign was in Ontario to prove our point. One of his campaign promises was to reduce the number of members at Queen's Park by 25 per cent. The provincial Liberals were opposed to that, and we all know what happened to them once the smoke had cleared.

The cost of six new members is a factor that I highlight for Liberals. They constantly rise in the House in the name of

effectiveness, efficiency, lowering the cost of the MP pension plan, and how they are keeping all their promises when they are really breaking them all. I ask them to justify a contradiction. They will increase the overhead of running the country by millions and millions of dollars by adding more politicians full of hot air trying to do their jobs, which they do not get done because that select group over there, the cabinet, runs the country; the rest of us are window dressing.

The current compensation or remuneration for one member of Parliament—

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): They are like mayors.

Mr. Silye: Exactly. I refer to the cost or the overhead for six new members. I am glad to see the President of the Treasury Board is here because he has his favourite pet project, the Cadillac pension plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sure the member is well aware that we do not refer to the presence or absence of anyone in the House.

Mr. Silye: I thought it might have been appreciated but I bow to the Chair.

The current compensation or remuneration for one member of Parliament is: a taxable salary of \$64,400; a tax free expense allowance of \$21,300, which is equivalent to a pre-tax value of \$42,000; a tax free travel status allowance of \$6,000; and tax free benefits as follows: free VIA Rail pass, free personal long distance telephone calls, free health and dental package, free parking at office and airports, free air travel for families, free life insurance policy which includes spouse and dependent children, free second language lessons, a severance of \$32,000 when defeated or retired, a re-entry or reallocation payment of \$9,000 when defeated or retired, plus the lucrative double standard obscene MP pension plan for a six-year member worth between \$500,000 to \$4.5 million depending upon the years of service and valued at \$28,400 per year by the independent consulting group Sobeco, Ernst & Young in February 1994. These benefits do not take into consideration the cost of householders, ten percenters, stationery, copying mail, and the list goes on.

It works out to at least \$1 million a year for each member of the House based on the overhead and everything else charged to the taxpayers. Multiply this by six and we have a cost of \$6 million.

We should not forget to kick in the cost of increased elections and redistributing the ridings, which the Liberals have estimated at \$5.6 million. The bill is in the \$12 million ballpark. It is a \$12 billion bill and the MP pension plan is supposed to save the country \$3 million. Now they are going to blow \$12 million. What is the net difference? They will increase the overhead of the country by \$9 million.