

Government Orders

We have already seen how members have run to the government to have the whole system changed at great expense to the Canadian taxpayers. I am concerned there might be loopholes that would allow government members and other members, from the Bloc for instance, to continue that.

● (1625)

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member has not answered the question.

Is he not aware the section to which he refers whereby Bloc members, Liberal members or any member could ask to have their riding put in a schedule either because it is too large or for any other consideration is not there? The last section of this bill is entitled coming into force, section 40. The previous section to add to this schedule was removed at the committee by unanimous vote, including the Reform members who sit on the committee.

Given that is the case, surely the member will understand the whole premise of his speech today is wrong. Given that all of that was wrong, should we now conclude he is now in favour of the bill because the whole premise by which he thought the bill was wrong is not there? It was removed several weeks ago in the committee on a motion by a committee member and approved by all other committee members.

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I reject the hon. member's premise. Obviously I addressed many points in my speech. The hon. member across the way has not addressed the concern I raised that there be a minimum level at which exemptions would not be permitted, 200,000 to 250,000, somewhere in that range. That is what we are calling for.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on a regrettable aspect of the Reform member's speech, namely the denigrating of an MP's work.

The member started by saying that the choices made by Canadians were not all good ones. This is tantamount to insulting voters. Then, he criticized the number of members. These are facile comments. Indeed, regardless of which side members sit in this House, regardless of their option, the fact is that, as with any group, some people are more efficient than others. However, the overwhelming majority of members put all their energy into their work and try to do a good job.

The member also indicated that we try to protect the interests of our individual ridings. I categorically object to that statement. When representations are made, at any stage, it is always with the public interest in mind, to ensure that voters are adequately represented and to also ensure that certain criteria are taken into account.

I will end with a question which expresses my astonishment. The Reform member, as well as the NDP member who preceded him, both feel that a constitutional reform is essential. Do members not realize that, since the failure of the Charlottetown accord, it is no longer possible to reform the existing structure?

[English]

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I reject the idea there is no possibility of constitutional reform. Canadians by and large want to ultimately change the system and there will be a day in the not too distant future when they will be ready to discuss that. Perhaps that is a little wishful thinking on behalf of the member from the Bloc Québécois who would like to separate. Sadly for him that will be denied in an upcoming referendum which they surely will lose due in no small part to the ineffectiveness of the Bloc Québécois to represent the constituents of Quebec.

Perhaps he has made an argument for me that certain back-benchers have not been effective in putting across the views of their constituents very effectively.

[Translation]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to ask a question to the hon. member, but first I would like to make a short comment.

After hearing the hon. member's speech, I think I can see the difference between Reform and Bloc members. I feel that Reform members represent taxpayers, while we, Bloc members, represent citizens.

It is often said that citizens do not want their riding to change, or that their member makes representations on their behalf to preserve the boundaries of the riding. That is because the member recognizes that these people feel a sense of belonging to their riding.

● (1630)

People get attached to their riding, which is represented by a member of Parliament. Often, they will have created a sense of community in that riding.

To think strictly in terms of numbers when establishing the boundaries of a riding would be to make the same mistake as in 1982, when the Canadian constitution was changed and when the country's ten provinces, whose populations are far from being equal, were said to be equal. That created an artificial country.

I believe that, given the attitude which frequently prevails when setting electoral boundaries, we create artificial ridings which do not mean anything special. It is as though Canada was a big cake cut into pieces, with the hope that these pieces will somehow be equal. You simply cannot do that with a country. You cannot overlook the sense of belonging.

I ask the hon. member: Does he not think it is important to take into account the voters' sense of belonging when redefining electoral boundaries?