

Government Orders

problem. We spoke up, as did our colleagues in the Reform Party. Strangely enough, our friends in the Liberal caucus, who probably had problems and were all coming back from Mr. Muffler, were completely silent on the subject.

I will now return to the subject being debated, before I am called to order. Bill C-18 must be passed, because the rules for setting electoral boundaries were laid down 30 years ago. From time to time, with specific bills, electoral reforms were stopped, changed or given a different direction, but the process as a whole was not thoroughly debated. I see the member for Beauséjour who seems to share my point of view; I believe that we can come to fairly unanimous agreement on this point. I would like to thank the hon. member for the consent he has just given.

So we can review the various provisions in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in an unbiased way. Since I myself am on this committee, I think that it would be inappropriate for me to take a position when we have a motion to refer it to the committee on which I sit. I will participate without prejudice as the committee hears witnesses. The motion of reference presented provides that the committee can hear witnesses and travel as required across Canada and also hear witnesses by teleconference.

A very broad procedure has been established. I think that this might answer the concerns of the hon. member for Calgary West who felt that Bill C-18 excluded the people from the debate. On the contrary, it is an inclusive process. In no way do we want to keep the people out of the debate; we do not want to have completely pointless hearings by provincial commissions that would be suspended in a few days because of Bill C-18. The people will have a chance to be heard by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I would also like to talk about the position of the hon. member for Beaver River, which I have trouble understanding.

• (1215)

I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech, and since she started it on Monday, I was able to read it over in *Hansard*. My understanding is that the hon. member was not trying to defend the Beaver River constituency, that her riding had been created in 1988, and that it would disappear if the proposals presently before the provincial commissions are passed.

Strangely enough, the hon. member is the same one who tabled Bill C-210, an Act to provide for the recall of members of the House of Commons. I think the hon. member for Beaver River should be pleased that her bill has still not been passed, because I presume it would not take long for the registers in her riding of Beaver River to open, asking for the recall of the hon. member, since she does not want to defend her constituents'

interests. I find her attitude strange, to say the least. I guess the hon. member must have her own reasons.

In the two minutes left, I want to discuss the last point, which deals with section 51 of the Constitution Act of 1867. Section 51 states that electoral boundaries readjustments will take place on completion of each decennial census. However, that same section also excludes the Northwest Territories and the Yukon from the process. Consequently, the redistribution takes place once constituencies are specifically allocated to these very vast but sparsely populated areas.

I think that, on top of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, we should also look at the case of the Magdalen Islands in Quebec, a distinct community remote from the continent, with its own specific problems—and I am pleased to see that the hon. member for Kingston approves—and also Labrador. That region forms a very large territory which should be represented by someone. There have to be ridings with a larger population, so as to enable Labrador to have its own local representative.

At least four exceptions should be made, and that does not include other representations which could be made. I am referring of course to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, but also to the Magdalen Islands and to Labrador.

It is with a very open mind that I will take part in the work of the committee, since I only made general comments which will certainly not keep me from listening with an open mind, free of any bias or preconceived idea, to the representations which will be made to the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, of which I am a member.

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the hon. member again on his remarks. At the beginning of his speech, he commented on Quebec's numerical disadvantage, with regard to representation in particular.

This kind of argument or historical reasoning is not new. Besides, over the past 25 years, every government elected to the House of Commons has been led by a Prime Minister from Quebec. Does the hon. member not agree with me that Quebec has historically been well represented in this federation?

• (1220)

Mr. Langlois: I will be pleased to respond, through you, Madam Speaker, to the comment by the hon. member for Ontario.

Of course we have been represented in this House by members from all political affiliations since 1867, often distinguished men and women, with the likes of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Prime Minister Louis Saint-Laurent. I will not talk about more modern times, and events which have not yet found a definitive place in history, for fear of sounding partisan, but I do believe that Quebec has had distinguished parliamentarians. That is not the point.