

he will support, as his colleagues have done, a minimum representation for Quebec.

The vote that will be held in this House will send a message to those Quebecers who still have doubts about the willingness to reform federal institutions. It will tell them whether there is, among the Liberal members opposite, the willingness to give Quebec a minimum guarantee that the Liberals themselves, when they were in opposition, felt so strongly that Quebec should have.

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I always respect the views of the hon. member for Bellechasse which he expressed so well this afternoon. I think the problem is that he chose a subject that is not part of the bill.

Actually, the issue he raised today by proposing this motion in amendment is a constitutional issue, one for a debate on the Constitution like we had during the debate to which he referred in his speech, right up to the vote. Was it on the constitutional question? Or was it on the Charlottetown accord? It was either one or the other.

I remember that evening when I was not in the House to vote on this question. It was a very important question, and I supported the Charlottetown accord.

• (1650)

I supported the accord, and the voters in Kingston and the Islands voted for it, but I am sure the hon. member for Bellechasse did not support the Charlottetown accord. I hope he did, but I am afraid he voted against it. I am sure that Reform Party members in this House voted against Charlottetown, and that is too bad, because it was a good accord and I supported it, as I said before.

[English]

The Charlottetown accord died. While some of us worked very hard on the referendum campaign to ensure its success, as I did, it was rejected by the people and we must respect that decision and try to get on with life.

If the hon. member wants to amend the Constitution of Canada to provide some minimum number of seats for another province, that is fine. We already have some of those in the Constitution, with respect to Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick at the moment. We can deal with amendments to the Constitution of Canada. However, I am not going to support efforts to make those changes through the back door by changing the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

The hon. member knows this is a back door way of trying to achieve something that requires a front door approach. What he is asking us to do is ensure that another province be added to the list of those guaranteed protection under the act. In my view we

### Government Orders

have too many of them now. In addition to the two guarantees in favour of a Senate floor in all provinces but that are now full force in effect in respect of both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, we have the grandfather clause introduced into the Constitution by the previous government.

The grandfather clause ensures that provinces will not drop below the number of seats they had in the House in I think 1979. That clause is protecting several other provinces which in a normal redistribution would lose seats to more populous provinces.

Now we have the spectacle of the Reform Party urging on the House a reduction in the number of seats in the House. It would have abolished the grandfather clause and reduced the number of seats in many provinces. I am afraid we would have said goodbye to the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster because his province would have lost a very large number of seats. I can only imagine that when the electors got a chance to deal with him, having put forward such a proposition, they would have made short work of his political career, which I am sure would be a matter of considerable regret to many of us in the House.

The government rejected this idea and I see it has not come back in amendments today. I can understand why. I suspect that if the members of the Reform Party pushed the reduction in seats in amendments with the dire consequences that we all know would follow for the province of Saskatchewan among others, they would be in difficulty today.

**Mr. Hermanson:** It is beyond the scope of the bill.

**Mr. Milliken:** The hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster from his seat said it is beyond the scope of the bill. I agree with him, but then so is this one.

**Mr. Hermanson:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Chair has made a ruling on whether the Bloc amendment was in order and within the scope of the bill. I wonder if he might withdraw that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary would know better than to do that. We must put a positive interpretation on that.

**Mr. Milliken:** Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware that it has already been ruled to be in order. It does not mean that I do not have my views on what the amendment was. I made them earlier today. They are on the record. The hon. member may wish to re-read my remarks.

Looking at this motion today, the hon. member for Bellechasse should also bear in mind that what we are trying to do by this law is get a law that will survive court challenges. He knows as well as I do that when we were considering the bill in committee we looked very carefully at previous court decisions in respect of representation matters in Canada.