

Government Orders

For those reasons which are substantial and very clear I urge members of the House to reconsider support for the bill, which is not serving the interests of Canadians as it ought to and has not been put together with appropriate measures.

I move:

That the amendment be amended by deleting the numbers 1, 4(a), 6(a) and 6(b)(i) and substituting the following:

"1, 4(a) and 6(a)".

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The amendment is in order. Resuming debate.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I was wondering whether there were questions and comments following my presentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): There were two minutes remaining. That is why I did not call questions and comments. Questions and comments.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Madam Speaker, since the reapportionment commission was holding hearings quite actively at the time the government heavy handedly intervened, and since in my riding there were no complaints about the way the redistribution had been planned nobody went to a hearing, including me.

I would like a little information. I would like to be informed as to how these things work. I wonder if the hon. member did have hearings in her riding and if she did if she would enlighten those of us who were not involved in that.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, there was some confusion about the hearings relating to the redistribution process that as I said was nearly finished when the government interrupted it.

Because of the government's decision to introduce legislation to start the process all over again, some of the commissions were not sure whether they ought to hold hearings. Some held them and some delayed them.

The notice of those hearings was in some cases very short. There were hearings held in my area and there were representations made. In some cases there were some recommendations for a better redrawing or a less disruptive redrawing of the boundaries in Calgary, where my riding is.

I also had feedback from other hearings that there was no substantial concern with the way the commissions had been proposing to redraw. It did vary across the country.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciated the comments from my colleague.

On this legislation, one of the major concerns I have, and I will speak to it in a moment or two as the seconder of this amendment, is that the government is behind in a time line. This legislation will impose a lot of restrictions on the commission in terms of its fulfilling its function in a very proper way. Would the member comment on the government's ability to deal with this circumstance under the current legislation?

Mrs. Ablonczy: Madam Speaker, there will be a substantial difficulty put in the way of all of the players in this new drama that has been launched on us as far as redistribution is concerned.

• (1245)

All of the steps in this process need to be done thoughtfully and with good administration, good recording, good consultation. There is going to be tremendous pressure on all of the people involved to get the documents together and make the studies and findings. It is not going to be a process done with as much time and thoughtfulness as could be done because there will be tremendous stress on the process to get it done in time for the next election. It is particularly unfortunate that is going to be done in light of the fact that it had already been done at some length two years previously. There was really no reason to have this thing started up again in a hurry.

I do think the hon. member has pinpointed another difficulty with this whole process.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is certainly my pleasure to second the amendment that was moved by my colleague. We have done that for a very important reason.

The amendment that is before the House at the present time on clause 6 indicates that the commission will only recommend changes to the existing electoral district boundaries where the factors set out are significant enough for changes. That clause put a rather rigid parameter for the commission to follow. When one examines the motives behind that kind of a directive to the commission, what it really does is tell the commission not to touch the existing boundaries unless they really have to. In a sense, it is a partisan intervention that controls what the commission can and cannot do. It does not allow for an objective look at the boundaries as such, which is wrong. Therefore, the Reform Party has moved this amendment to deal with that issue and try in every way possible to allow the commission to have flexibility in boundary determinations.

We have also added, in support of this, a substitute amendment, clause 4.(a), which adds the requirement for the two non-judicial commission members to be residents in the province for which the commission is established.