

*Government Orders*

House and Canadians the reason the government is not agreeing with these amendments.

I listened to the evidence. After hearing all the evidence, I came to my conclusion. It is a good conclusion and I invite the hon. member to support it.

What he said was that as a result of the changes in this bill voter equity was almost meaningless. I have to disagree with that. The essential principle dealing with redistribution in Canada is set out in clause 19(1) of this bill. If he goes back to that basic principle, I think he will agree with me that what we did was right. It says:

The principle that shall guide each commission in preparing a report is that effective representation be the paramount consideration in determining reasonable electoral district boundaries in the province for which the commission is established.

• (1545)

As a person who represents a mixed rural and urban riding, but almost all urban, I would have expected that equality would require every riding in Canada to be the same size in terms of the number of electors.

**Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead):** In principle.

**Mr. Milliken:** In principle. I recognize the principle of effective representation, which is the principle we are striving for as set out in section 19 of the act. Coincidentally it is the principle enunciated by the Supreme Court of Canada in its decision with respect to redistribution in the province of Saskatchewan, where the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster resides and which he knows quite a lot about I suspect. The principle demands that in determining effective representation one looks at more than the number of electors residing in a particular geographic area.

We looked at this. We looked at Canada as a whole. We looked at the maps and we heard from members of Parliament from across the country who came to the committee and expressed their views on what effective representation meant. They told us about the problems they have in representing electors in some of the remote ridings.

Strangely, the hon. member for Labrador did not come. Yet it is one of the ridings that has been accepted for some time as a separate riding under the current redistribution rules. He did not come to complain to the committee that he had grave difficulty in representing his riding. Some of us know some of the problems he has.

The hon. member for Nunatsiag who has over one million square kilometres in his riding—one-third of the country is in his constituency—did not come to the committee to complain about the problems he faces. However, there is not much he can do. He has a small population but they are scattered over an area that would make most of us blush—

**Mr. Hermanson:** Tell the whole story.

**Mr. Milliken:** I am telling the whole story. He has a special case. He had a special riding created. The Northwest Territories is assigned two ridings under the Constitution. It will keep those two. They are going to be small for awhile. Some day maybe they will not be, but for the moment they are small.

Looking at the rest of the country we have tremendous diversity. The hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster in his speech mentioned British Columbia. There are significant differences in population in ridings in British Columbia. I do not think there were any in the last proposals put forward by the commission that were exceptions in that province. There may have been one before but I do not think so. I do not think there was in 1987 either. Yet still there is a fair variation.

The commissions in the province of Saskatchewan drew the boundaries very close to the limit. They stayed very close to it so there is not a big discrepancy. I congratulate the commissions on their work. However, in some provinces it is hard to do that. In some it is harder than in others. The size of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, for example, has resulted in a difference of view as to whether we should have a 15 per cent limit or a 25 per cent limit in variation. The bill proposed 25; the hon. member in his amendment is proposing 15.

I suggest that his doom and gloom scenario, his suggestion that “voter equity would be almost meaningless” is not correct. Under the previous law where 25 per cent was the variation, in 1987 there were five constituencies in all of Canada that were beyond the 25 per cent limit, either above or below. One was above, four were below. That is five constituencies out of 295. It is not something that renders voter equity almost meaningless, as suggested by the hon. member.

In the 1994 redistribution proposals that the commissions completed that the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster says were so unpopular with Liberal members and I say were unpopular in large part with his own—he does not like to talk about that—

**Mr. Hermanson:** No. How many appeared before the committee?

**Mr. Milliken:** No, he says. Yes, I say to him. He knows perfectly well that many of his members were quite unhappy, almost weepy at the proposals that were put forward by the—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Milliken:** Now I hear them laughing because they do not like to think of them weeping, but a few months ago it was not quite that way.

The fact is there were two ridings in all the 1994 proposals that were above or below the 25 per cent quotient.