

Government Orders

riding. Making an electoral division just because the Elections Act says it has to be done every ten years seems to ignore that aspect of the job of a member of Parliament.

In my case, for example, I will be called to represent between 30,000 and 35,000 new constituents, whom I do not know, in municipalities—I heard earlier my colleague in front of me mention municipalities like Béthanie and so on—where I never set foot in my life. And overnight, I will have to represent these people. There are group dynamics emerging in our society. People get used to living together, they arrive at a consensus and convey it to their member of Parliament if he or she has not already perceived it naturally.

In my case, I am afraid that I do not know what people whom I do not know might want. And if we are to simply change numbers, I am sure that my colleague from Shefford would be a much better representative of these people than I, because I simply do not know these municipalities, these RCMs, these potential constituents.

Of course, the Bloc Québécois will make it its duty to represent everybody in Quebec. But the fact remains that for specific or particular aspects, the member for Shefford, who is already there, would certainly do a better job than I, because of the group dynamics and the thinking of people in these regions. He would be able to pinpoint what should be done in that riding, whereas for me, as a new member to these people, by the time I go around and get acquainted with everybody's problems, by the time I get to know their municipalities and the problems of these municipalities and these RCMs, I am afraid these people will suffer the consequences. Therefore, I do not agree with the argument that democracy requires that the electoral boundaries be readjusted every ten years, no matter what comes out of the process.

• (1205)

The county of Chambly which I represent and which has about 75,000 constituents is relatively dense. Mr. Speaker, you said earlier that you travel a lot, especially in the county of Shefford. Unfortunately, I never had the pleasure to see you in the county of Chambly, but I hope that you went through it. If not, I invite you to visit it.

The Richelieu River runs right through my county from one end to the other. My county is the heartland of the Patriots. Therefore, I am not the first independentist mentioned in the House of Commons. Incidentally, I was informed recently that five independentists from Beloeil had lost their lives during the battle of the Patriots, in 1837. These people, some Préfontaines and some Lafrances from Beloeil, are from my county. The reason I mention the period of 1837 is because these people live together and know each other. They were builders. They built bridges on the famous Richelieu river. They built churches, they built their parish. These people are used to living together. There

is a spirit of community among the residents of a same region. It is an unwritten tradition, but it exists all the same.

When you add 35,000 new electors whom he does not know to an MP, you distort the group dynamics, to the detriment not of the MP or the federal government, but of the constituents concerned. Now if you want to talk about more practical things, take telephone communications.

In my riding, things are not as bad. From one end of my riding to the other, people cannot call one another direct and have to make a long-distance call. As far as I am concerned, as a member of Parliament, if I want to be able to serve my constituents and be available, I have my office in the middle of the riding where I can call everywhere without high charges to my government, meaning the taxpayers. Also, my constituents can call me from anywhere in the riding without having to pay long-distance bills. For some people, specifically older people, long-distance charges are significant and unforeseen expenses, particularly when they have to speak to their elected representative, which can penalize them.

So imagine the surprise when I was told that people in my riding would have to constantly use Bell Canada long-distance service in order to communicate with their elected representative. That could be very expensive for them. You could argue that it is only a small technical problem. But when we are talking about the representation of members of Parliament, there is a risk in doing that, because we could become less and less representative through such occurrences. This redistribution of the electoral map could prevent members of Parliament from doing their job. This is my first concern.

[English]

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to speak in favour of the motions that the Reform Party has placed before all members of this House today. I do this because I feel so strongly that we need changes in government. We need changes in the way we have been operating.

These amendments to this motion would limit the delay to 12 months on this process and would formally keep the commissioners who are already in place. I am very strongly in favour of those motions. Of course my preference and the preference of all members of the Reform Party would be that Bill C-18 not proceed at all.

I am an ordinary Canadian, an ordinary person. I have serious concerns about the things that have been happening in this country such as the way our country has been run, the enormous deficit and debt that all Canadians face, and unemployment. One of the biggest items that every member in this House heard people speak about during the election campaign was that Canadians wanted more accountability. That is worth repeating. The Canadian people demanded more accountability from their