

*Government Orders*

Those nine or ten very positive improvements to the legislation are encompassed in the bill. All I hear in lengthy speeches from the opposition are complaints. There has not been mention of any of the very positive aspects. I invite hon. members to look at the brighter side and not dwell on the things that are not there.

I should like to turn to a couple of things that are not in it and say something about them. I will deal first with the complaints of the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster and then I will turn to the hon. member for Bellechasse.

The member complained repeatedly that members of the House were not free to express their views in the committee. We obviously had a very free expression of views. He has quoted extensively from speeches of members, particularly members on this side. I can understand why he would want to quote them. In his remarks he said how they shared a view one day and changed their minds another.

Part of the advantage of committee work is that we get to hear witnesses and study various options. The members of the committee looked at the things we could do. He may have forgotten that we spent three days in July last year, and he was there, hearing witnesses. We worked quite hard with long sessions lasting all day.

Having heard the evidence of witnesses we had discussions. They influenced us in various ways. Some of us were swayed by some witnesses and felt that maybe we should do this one day and then, having read other material and reflected on it, we changed our minds. That was true of many members of the committee.

Had I been expressing views in the committee as the chairman of the committee, I am sure he would have been quoting me as having said one thing one day and maybe something else the next. My views changed too as I read up on the subject and was persuaded by various witnesses, by discussions with my colleagues on the committee and by material I read on a subject such as the royal commission report on electoral reform and party financing.

Having seen all that material, having formed our views and having reflected on the matter, many members changed their minds. The hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster attributed all kinds of reasons to this that are not really accurate in every case at all and certainly not generally fair to hon. members who made up their minds. He should not indulge in such speculation on the reasons people make up their minds the way they do.

Naturally there are discussions in caucus. Naturally there is a consensus building on issues like this one. On the bill itself there was a significant change that he pressed for. That was the elimination of scheduled ridings and a change to put the power back in commissions to make the decisions that could have been

made in the House because of various complaints from members. That was the response to complaints that he raised. The members on our side looked at it and decided there was a better way. I think the bill reflects that. I heard no criticism of that aspect of the bill from the hon. member in his speech.

The committee looked at the evidence, weighed the evidence and came to conclusions. We did not all come to the same conclusions. That is quite obvious from the speeches this afternoon. However, we came to conclusions on a bill that has very positive aspects that will have a significant impact on the way we do redistributions in the country and a very positive influence in that regard.

The redistribution done under the bill will be good. It will be better than what we had before, in part because the process is more open, in part because the commissioners will be more responsive to the wishes of the members of the House as they are chosen essentially by the members of the House, and because the opportunity for public input is very significantly enhanced under the bill.

In reflecting on whether or not to support the bill I invite members to consider those items, to look at the positive side and ignore the very negative side.

Another complaint the member made dealt with the size of the House. Frankly that is not a matter for a redistribution bill. It is a matter for changes in the Constitution of the country. The committee was very reluctant to get into constitutional change. The number of seats assigned to the provinces under the Constitution is set out in the Constitution Act. It is a matter of constitutional amendment to change it.

• (1705)

The hon. member wanted either to cap or decrease the size of the House. Most members on our side have considered the matter. There was some initial attractiveness to the idea. Last summer there was a lot of media attention focused on the size of the House and whether or not we really needed a House of this size. They reflected and decided that with 295 members for a country the geographic size of Canada we were not significantly over-represented in the House.

Our population is growing. Most of us in Ontario represent about 100,000 people. That is a significant number. We cannot get to meet them all in our term of office; it is virtually impossible to do so.

I am sure the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster knows from his own experience, having been in the House now for a year and a half, how difficult it must be for him to meet his electors. Members of Parliament do not have all the time in the world to be out in their constituencies. When we go to our constituencies it is difficult to go door to door when we are trying to do our work as representatives, meet groups and people in our offices who ask to see us, not just to see the people who