

*Private Members' Business*

really changed the face of politics in British Columbia at that time.

We have had other members in this House who have crossed the floor, some to sit as independents, some to maintain their party label but to be considered independent. We have had a group that has left other parties in this House to pursue the whole question and notion of an independent Quebec.

I think the member may have thought this was an innocuous idea and a wonderful pious idea, but I think he has touched a raw nerve because of the experience that many of us have had with this view. I can tell the House how people feel in their constituencies when the person they elected on a certain set of values says: "To heck with you, I don't believe that any more. I am crossing the floor and sitting with a different party".

I think the member is right. I think this bill should be allowed to pass so that those people who have done that can go back to their constituents and put their case. They may get re-elected in that new position. As the member said—he is quite right—we can do that, but I think those elected persons, those politician, owe it to their constituents to go back and say why they crossed the floor and why they changed their party affiliation, and to account to their constituents for that.

If I tallied it up we probably would have had seven to ten by-elections by now in this House if this bill had been passed. It might have been okay for Canadians to see the exact intent of this bill and how strongly those members felt about their views on different issues. It might have been okay for them to be required to go back to their constituents to account for the change. I think the member has raised that important issue with this bill. If we take a look at the political history of British Columbia, what the Liberals did there in joining with the Socreds, we see that it changed the face of politics in British Columbia. I wished at the time that those Liberals had resigned their seats and had said: "I am not a Liberal any more. I am really a Socred". Socred, Liberal, Tory are all the same anyway. However, it changed the face of political history just as we might have in this House with the number of members from the Liberal and Conservative parties who have left their parties and continued to sit in the House.

I think they owe it to their constituents and to Canada, if they are going to do that, to resign their seats, run in a by-election, be accountable to their constituents and recognize their views. If they can win the day again in a by-election, so be it; back into the House they come.

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, I want to start by saying that I have the deepest respect for my colleague from Ottawa South.

One of the most amazing things within the Liberal Party is that we can openly debate and have differing points of view. That should not generate a situation in my view where because we disagree we necessarily would have to take an independent course.

Even though I agree with the spirit of where my colleague is coming from in the sense that he is trying to generate much more accountability to his constituents, I personally do not think that this bill will serve that purpose. I agree with my colleague from Ottawa South that when we are running under a party banner and are really aggressive in our campaign we might be responsible for probably not more than 5 per cent of the vote. I agree with my colleague on that particular point. Therefore, if we are running under a party banner we should realize, if elected, that 95 per cent of the reason is probably because of our leader and the party.

When we come to the House of Commons there are moments within our party caucuses when we are debating issues on policy. It could be anything from constitutional debate to tax reform. I believe there are times when we may have profound disagreement. Some of these disagreements develop after we have been elected because policy is an evolving situation.

I would be a little concerned that if this bill were to pass it might cause too much timidity. There might be an apprehension on the part of members to really go to the wall in their own caucuses.

Listen, it is no secret. In every caucus in the country there are Whips. Sometimes when you do not fall into line they change your seating or you are not put on Question Period or they try to send you a signal that you are not necessarily following the party line. You might agree with 75 per cent of the other party policy, and because you have a particular disagreement on that one issue you should not be put into a position where you are basically an independent. If this bill were to pass, it could