

Government Orders

I mentioned the subject of my private member's bill. I am willing to have everybody in this House and in committee sit down to see how we can improve this place to better reflect the constituents whom we represent. This must be dealt with in a serious fashion. It must not be used as an opportunity to filibuster. My wish and my hope is that we will come up with a bill that is a great improvement over the one we presently have.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): It always makes me wonder when a member of the House stands up and criticizes other parties and other members as to what their motivation is rather than defending the bill his party has put forward.

• (1155)

It reminds me of question period when the Official Opposition presses the government too closely on an issue. It continues to drag up the old story that the Leader of the Official Opposition was a member of the former government. Whenever that happens it tells me that they are getting close to something the government does not want to discuss and the pressure is being placed on it by the Official Opposition.

When the member stands up and spends at least 50 per cent of his time criticizing the Reform Party it makes me wonder what he is afraid of. If the big *R* Reform movement in his constituency is not already pressing him a little too closely, four years from now he really will have something to worry about.

Nevertheless if this bill contained the means by which the number of members in this House would be capped, then as my colleague who asked the question before me stated there would be support for that in the Reform Party caucus. That is what we stand for. We do not need more representation across this country; we need better representation, representation that we have not received from either the Liberal or the Tory governments.

When we talk about debt it is his government that began that enormous slide into the debt hole. It left us with over \$200 billion and another \$300 billion was added by the Tory government. Now we are at a point where organizations like the Fraser Institute will not advise us. They say we may have gone too far and we may face a debt crisis that is beyond our control.

Will the member address the reason the capping of the number of members in this House is not within the bill itself. To me it is a farce when he stands up and talks about capping the number of members in this House because it ought to be in the bill but is not.

Mr. Telegdi: Madam Speaker, we do not govern by divine right. We are mortals. We on this side of the House recognize that anyway.

We understand it takes time to put a bill together that will stand up to the scrutiny of time. That is what we are doing. We

are starting the process toward it. Many members in my caucus and I very much wish that is what we are going to be looking to do.

We can possibly come up with a plan saying that for whatever constitutional consideration and to recognize some of those agreements we are going to cap the size of the House of Commons at, let us say, 300 members. I could live with that as a final cap on numbers. It is very important to get this bill moving so we can get to that.

If the big *R* Reformers want to improve this place, then please listen to a small *r* reformer. Let us get moving in that direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Madam Speaker, I will try to keep my contribution to this debate as relevant as possible to the subject before the House: Bill C-18, an Act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

I had some trouble following the train of thought of the hon. member for Waterloo, since his speech covered a variety of topics, including some criticism of the behaviour of Reform Party members. That is not the intent of my speech today.

First of all, I must say, it is always distressing to see a government using a motion for time allocation, for closure, to put an end to debate.

• (1200)

It is always, or nearly always, a distressing moment for parliamentarians to see this desire to gag a democratic debate. We did not support the motion, because it is the very essence of our parliamentary system that debate should take place without undue haste, and with as much for reflection and consideration as possible.

In the case of Bill C-18 before the House today, the debate started on Monday this week, after notice given Friday last week. And after one day of debate, they imposed closure. Why the hurry, when the government could easily have scheduled the tabling of this bill a week or two earlier?

I have somewhat mixed feelings when I speak to Bill C-18, because I strongly object to restricting the debate on a bill in this House, especially after only one day of debate. It is not a matter of life and death, and the government could have taken steps to avoid this.

On the other hand, and this is why I have mixed feelings about the substance of Bill C-18, I share a number of views held by members of the government majority. Bill C-18 asks us to suspend the current process for electoral boundaries review and would refer the issue of representation in this Parliament, including section 51 of the Constitution Act, 1867, to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs; but more about this later.