

Government Orders

• (1155)

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but conclude that reviewing the electoral boundaries is not just a matter of mathematics. There might not be general agreement about this, but I think it is wrong to say that since there are six million people in Quebec, you just have to divide this number by 75 to get the average number of people to be included in each riding. I think there are much more appropriate, fair and accurate criteria that seem not to have been applied.

One of them that comes up often is services provided to the public. Another is administrative regions. It is illogical to split an RCM that has been part of the riding of Berthier—Montcalm, or of Berthier—Maskinongé —Lanaudière since Confederation and to transfer it to the neighbouring riding of Joliette. As I was saying a moment ago, there are many such cases. The criteria the commission seems to have applied in drawing the new boundaries have not been respected in my county. Maybe I am unlucky, but that is a fact!

Then, as for accessibility, is it right that the boundary of a riding run through a neighbouring riding? Is it right to create some kind of doughnut hole in the middle of a federal riding? I do not think so. Has anyone stopped for five minutes to consider whether in terms of geography and accessibility this was viable for taxpayers? I think no one considered that kind of concern for very long.

There are also other criteria that could be examined, but this is not the place to do it. In my capacity as member for Berthier—Montcalm, I intend to submit a brief if the issue is not settled in the House by April 20. Mr. Speaker, any member who wants to represent his riding, as is his duty, should listen to his constituents. But when you want to get things done, it is much better to deal with one member instead of two as the reeve of the D'Autray RCM said. That makes perfect sense and everybody in this House would agree that this should be a consideration.

It is not just a matter of drawing boundaries on a map. The whole context should be examined and consultation should take place before any proposal is made. People should be involved instead of being presented with a *fait accompli*. We should be listening to the wishes of the people and try to reconcile contradictory views and ideas that do not quite fit. Most of all, we should avoid the traditional practice of forcing new ridings on people.

During the last election campaign, I realized much to my surprise that constituents in the Montcalm area of my riding did not know they were part of the riding of Berthier—Montcalm. They all thought they were part of the Joliette riding and were wondering what I was doing there. Most likely, they did not see much of their former member. True, he needed two terms to get

to know the extent of his own riding, so it is easy to understand the confusion the constituents were in.

Mr. Speaker, you will have concluded by now that I oppose the amendment since much more than 24 months would be necessary to correct all those deficiencies. And two years is not that long, after all. Canada may then have only 220 ridings to readjust so that there will be savings there for everybody.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague, the member for Shefford, talked about my riding, Chambly, a little while ago. Two weeks ago, before the Easter recess, I said in this House that I did not understand why a number of voters of my colleague's riding were transferred to mine, and why the population of my riding increased from 75,000 to 110,000 while the population of his riding decreased from 110,000 to 75,000. I still do not understand.

As my friend from the Reform Party said, are we proceeding with this readjustment simply because the act says that we have to do it every ten years? Are we doing this for the fun of it, because the act says we have to do it once every ten years, without asking ourselves if it is appropriate, if it is good or not? That is not important, just do it.

• (1200)

The member for Maskinongé—Montcalm just said that his new riding will be full of holes. On the South Shore of Montreal, and I assume no one did it on purpose, this electoral redistribution, by a curious coincidence, will result in the Liberal party standing to gain another riding in the next election because on the South Shore or in the Eastern Townships the riding of Saint-Lambert will have a strong contingent of new Canadians. But I assume that is only a coincidence and not a calculated Machiavellian act.

All of us in this House, like the member for Beauséjour, who is always flashing that smile that we all like, or like the members of the Reform Party, did not suddenly become members of Parliament. Before being elected to this House, you must work a long time, get involved in your riding, and meet your constituents. You know, it could be that our door-to-door campaign for the last election was only the end of a cycle. But I am sure that the member for Beauséjour and all the other members of this House have spent many years—10 or 15 years or more—criss-crossing their ridings and meeting disadvantaged groups, social groups, unions, employers in some cases, fishermen for people in the maritimes.

We did not become members of Parliament by chance. We were chosen, elected and sent here by the people. And by constantly rubbing shoulders with these people, which frequently happens almost instinctively, the members here present have embraced or somewhat adopted their constituents' philosophy, so they generally come here with a precise idea of the philosophy or opinion or direction that they convey in their respective