

Government Orders

However, the Bloc Québécois will only support this government motion on certain conditions.

First, we must denounce, once again, the arbitrary and inconsistent new boundaries drawn up in recent years and, in this regard, we must also mention the importance of administrative divisions in Quebec.

Not only are these administrative zones strategically important for Quebec but they are based on fundamental geographical, economic, industrial and cultural elements.

As long as Quebec remains, in spite of itself, a member of the Canadian Confederation, the federal commissions responsible for readjusting electoral boundaries will have to consider regional municipalities, counties and administrative regions.

As we said in a previous speech, our second reservation about motion M-10 is that the decentralization of decision-making powers should, in our opinion, be an essential element of regional policy in the year 2000.

The Canadian policy advocated by a Liberal government big on centralization lacks a socio-economic development perspective.

We see the decentralization of political and economic decision-making as essential to creating jobs in RCMs.

In line with Minister Picotte's reform and the consolidation of regional development councils, the Bloc Québécois has made a commitment to direct political and economic decision-making to the regions.

• (1115)

The Bloc Québécois proposes that the State of Quebec no longer act alone in planning coherent economic development. In our view, the general framework for this development must be redefined, starting with the regions. Decentralization of the bureaucratic monster which the central State has become requires Quebec's political sovereignty.

The Bloc Québécois wants to go beyond changes to the political structure. We recommend regional self-management based on fundamental democracy. We advocate the creation of highly decentralized and antibureaucratic organizations. In short, we reject the authoritarian social and economic management policies which are pursued by the unified political power representing central States and which are ruining the public finances of Canada and Quebec.

A two-year moratorium, during which decentralization of the decision-making process will be stepped up under the Parti Québécois in Quebec, will allow riding residents to concentrate more on ensuring regional development rather than on building a Canada that can never be.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois recommends that the entire federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act be reformulated, and that the process be undertaken as soon as possible within the framework of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

We must take advantage of the two-year moratorium on the redistribution of electoral boundaries to weigh carefully all the implications of adjustments of this nature to ridings.

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I stand here today as a very proud member of the House of Commons representing the province of British Columbia. The reason I say it that way is because with all due respect to my Liberal counterparts from our province, they have remained silent on this issue. It is an issue of great concern to the people of British Columbia.

We received by fax a copy of a letter that our premier sent to the Prime Minister. I will read part of it:

I am appalled that your government, with the support of six B.C. Liberal MPs, has betrayed the best interests of British Columbia in introducing this measure with closure. Your actions will deny B.C. its fair representation in the House of Commons.

He goes on to point out:

As you know, with the defeat of the Charlottetown accord, B.C. lost gains it made in that agreement which would have given this province five more seats before the 2001 census. That was to build on scheduled redistribution for 1996 when B.C.'s representation in the House of Commons was to increase by two seats. This was a clear recognition of B.C.'s severe under-representation in the House of Commons.

At the risk of being branded one of those crazy BCers, here we go all over again, let me also state that I am a proud Canadian citizen. I stand for a united Canada as I believe the vast majority of people in B.C. do.

However, why is it that every time we turn around in British Columbia measures are taken in this place, even when we have representatives on the government side, that we do not consider to be rational and fair representation? We feel we are almost being abandoned.

The leader of the opposition, Mr. Gordon Campbell, also wrote to the Prime Minister. He states:

Mr. Minister, the bill makes no sense.

He is referring to Bill C-18.

Parliament does not strengthen the country by disenfranchising its fastest growing region nor does Parliament strengthen its bond to the people it serves by further weakening the principle of one person, one vote.

One of the interesting things I have found since coming to Ottawa is that the amount of news that flows in this direction into the awareness of people in central Canada about the concerns of the people of British Columbia seems to be minuscule. If I did not have my constituency office in Cranbrook constantly feeding me information from the western press I