

Freedom of association is one of the cornerstones of our charter. We must never forget that. I think that the hon. member, well-intentioned though he may be, should realize that this is not just an amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act or the Canada Elections Act. It would be a constitutional amendment. We could not exclude a group from the charter just because they are parliamentarians, because they were elected under a political banner, and we can not do that because we cannot predict what will happen in the future.

Who knows? In two or three weeks maybe a new political party will be formed, and maybe I will not like its philosophy. I do not know what will happen, any more than the hon. member, which is why we have freedom of expression, the basic right of every Canadian.

We fought to maintain this principle and include it in the Constitution. Are we going to jettison it today? I don't think so. We cannot do that, because if we start telling members of Parliament they do not have the right to cross the floor once they are elected, we are taking away their freedom of expression and freedom of association. First, members of Parliament—and where will it all end? That is the problem I see in the hon. member's arguments, and that is why I object to this kind of legislation. The political implications go far beyond a member's affiliation to a party, and, in fact, they go against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That is why, as the member for Champlain, as an elected representative who believes in the value of freedom of expression, I must inform the hon. member that I am not in favour of this bill, and if there were a vote, I would vote against it.

[English]

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to rise, albeit for a short time, to discuss Bill C-322. The member has basically pointed out that if an elected member of Parliament crosses the floor and joins another party there should be a vacancy and he or she should run for office.

• (1720)

I rise to support the spirit of the bill and the idea behind it. I actually want to congratulate the member for his candour in this regard. Certainly one could see it as a vicious attack on one of his colleagues, the member for

Edmonton Southeast. Whatever is going on in the Liberal caucus, the dissent there or whatever, this may be part of a drive to run one of its members out of its own caucus. I am not sure if that is the intent of the member, but it may be indicative of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member. He is imputing motives, and I do not think that this has its place, especially in private members' hour. It is not allowed during Question Period and I cannot see how it can be at this time.

I would ask the hon. member to withdraw and continue in another line, please.

Mr. Gardiner: Madam Speaker, I think the member's bill is pretty clear. I am really citing from my experience in British Columbia. We have had a tremendous amount of experience with this particular situation. I will withdraw if the member thinks I am suggesting something negative about an attack on his own colleague. But I can say very clearly that we from British Columbia have had a lot of experience with Liberals on this kind of deal where they have crossed the floor from different parties and the appalling approach they have taken to representing their electors and the views of voters in their ridings on it.

We have had some experience with this and it is not good. That is why I am so concerned about this issue. I think the member certainly did a bit of research on this, but he could have taken a look at the track record of his own party in this regard.

When we are elected to our Parliament and to our legislatures, it is important that we indicate as fully as we can to our constituents where we stand on our views. Members belong to different parties for different reasons. They get elected on a platform and they get elected on their ideas. We now have a proposal which I said I support in spirit, but I am expressing some concerns because of the experience we have had in this regard. I had hoped that we would take a look at how this might have applied historically.

Let us take a look at the experience we had in British Columbia. At one time a dramatic change in policy and direction was taken when in fact three Liberal members of the provincial legislature—Mr. Garde Gardom, Allan Williams and Pat McGeer—joined the Social Credit Party and really changed the course of political history in British Columbia. It is perhaps a big example of what the member is getting at. In that case those three Liberals