

Government Orders

going to have to look at some other way to ensure that people are getting the proper representation.

I do not think the hard-pressed Canadian taxpayer wants to hear from us that we are going to increase the number of members of Parliament. Again, my shock really knows few bounds that the hon. members from the Reform Party could possibly be advocating this. They talk about the fact that there is a process in place. Yes, there is. But as the hon. member who spoke previous to me said, we are here to legislate. We are here to legislate when things are not working in their most optimum way to ensure that they do.

This bill is part of our responsibility that we are exercising to ensure that the House does for the people of Canada what the people of Canada deserve and need, not follow a format that has probably outlived its usefulness.

If the members of the Reform Party are worried about the money spent in getting to this point—as apparently they are, I believe I heard the hon. member for Beaver River talk about this yesterday—I can only say that perhaps the time should have come some years ago to put an end to this. Unfortunately we have not been in power for nine years. Now we are and now we say that this must stop. This is not the way to go. This is not the time to increase the number of members of Parliament and that spending the unconscionable amounts of money, a lot more than was spent already, I might add—perhaps it is the arithmetic that is the problem here—is putting good money after bad.

Again I can only reiterate that it is utterly unbelievable, given what we have heard day in and day out since January 17. I know that my friends here are absolutely astounded as am I. I can see that the member for Scarborough—Rouge River just does not know where to turn at this stage of the game.

That members of Parliament from the Reform Party in all seriousness are advocating that we continue this and increase these numbers is really beyond my comprehension. The time to undertake a comprehensive review of the process is now. I take a leaf from the book of my friend who spoke previously and say: This is what we are about. We are all legislators. It is our responsibility to ensure that the legislation that comes from this House is in the best interests of Canadians. It is time to review a great number of things but it is certainly time to review the electoral process and the way we decide representation and how representation shall be meted out. It is time to tackle this issue because we are still at an early stage in the process. It is time because the existing electoral boundaries commissions have not yet invested the time, energy and funds into holding public hearings.

I wonder if my learned friends on the other side of the floor have any idea just how much that process will cost Canadians along with the addition of all those new members of Parliament. I am quite taken aback by the stand taken by the Reform Party of Canada. It amazes me, as I know it would certainly amaze my constituents. There are individual reasons why we do not want this redistribution, aside from the question of saving money, aside from the reason that Canadians do not think we need more MPs.

• (1340)

I will close, Madam Speaker, by saying that in my riding of Halifax I would lose the section known as Halifax Atlantic. It is a wonderful section, the only part of my riding that has a rural element. It has five fishing villages. It has been in my riding since the redistribution that took place just before the 1988 election. I did not win it in 1988, I lost it. In 1993 I won it and I won it in a big way.

I am sure that those members on the other side of the House who are worried about this kind of thing. As a member who has been here for five years I can tell them that kind of change rarely makes a difference in the long run to your electoral majorities if you are a constituency person who works his or her riding. The people you represent are the people you represent, and the geographical ideas that some people put forward as being a problem do not really exist.

The main issue here is saving the money of the Canadian taxpayers. I am appalled that the Reform Party does not want to do this.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this House to speak to Bill C-18, an Act to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

As you know, Madam Speaker, my party does not wish to run in the next elections. We hope that, by then, Quebec will be independent. Nonetheless, the proposals made by the Electoral District Boundaries Commission upset several of my colleagues across Canada.

I am not the kind to shirk my responsibilities. When I saw that the commission had carved up my riding of Lotbinière, I did not have any other choice but to react strongly.

In no time, it created an uproar in my constituency. Following the announcement of the proposed reform, around 20 articles, editorials and letters to the editor appeared in local newspapers. It is hardly surprising since the Bois-Francs area was split into three different ridings. The commission wanted to combine regional county municipalities into federal ridings, ignoring certain historical, economical, social and cultural factors.