

*Government Orders*

Members will recall that the Charlottetown accord was rejected through most of the country. The Bloc Quebecois, which suddenly finds it is fond of the 25 per cent guarantee in the Charlottetown accord, forgets that that guarantee was part of a package—not just the whole accord, but specifically part of a package of reforms to both the Senate and Commons.

These reforms were rejected for a number of reasons, not simply because of the issue of departure from representation by population but also because of the expansion of the size of the House of Commons, an expansion that would have gone dramatically to 337 members overnight and would have moved even more quickly into the future. That was one reason for rejection, something we are now replicating with this act, although not as badly.

Of course it was also rejected because of the obviously inadequate provisions as they related to the Senate, the failure to guarantee election to the upper House, the failure as well to guarantee effective powers for that body to protect the various regional interests that chamber is supposed to secure.

I do not want to go on too long because I have talked at length over the past year about this bill. We remain opposed to the provisions of this legislation, to the idea that we should scrap the existing boundary commissions and start from scratch. The few worthwhile improvements here can certainly be deferred to the 1996 census. We would save the taxpayers \$5 million.

I do want to emphasize that in opposing this bill we in no way endorse the obstructionist tactics of the Bloc Quebecois, who are opposing this bill for entirely different reasons related to the separation of Quebec. The 25 per cent guarantee they have demanded for Quebec and the rationale they have used to back that demand simply do not stand up to factual scrutiny.

I should add in closing that it is increasingly clear that the reason the members of the Bloc Quebecois are so interested in guaranteeing a certain number of seats for Quebec in the House of Commons is that I think they are coming to realize that Quebec will be here in the House of Commons by the time the next election comes around and will be here for many more elections after that. We look forward to that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened in particular to the last part of the MP's speech. He knows his Canadian history. He knows the recent history of Quebec since Charlottetown and Meech. English Canada has said no to Quebec several times.

• (1255)

Does he not think that the people of Quebec, one of Canada's founding peoples, have a legitimate claim to this 25 per cent guarantee? I think that Quebec's request is quite modest. There is almost unanimous support for it, and I fail to understand why the hon. member from western Canada wants to completely ignore, under false pretexts, Quebec's legitimate request. I sincerely hope that he will explain the reason why.

**Mr. Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I support the principle of representation by population in the House of Commons. It is a democratic principle enshrined in the Constitution.

In fact, Quebec could end up with close to 25 per cent of the seats in the House after the proposed redistribution.

In addition, when the hon. member talks about post-Meech Quebec, one thing is clear to me, and that is that Quebecers want to keep their Quebecois and Canadian identity and it is only within a federal state that both will be possible.

[English]

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the debate concerns Bill C-69, which is comprehensive in its scope but nevertheless has a precisely defined mandate, and that is concerned with electoral boundary redistribution. It is not a place to re-examine or to start again debates that were conducted in other arenas in which I and other hon. members had the privilege of taking part. It is not a reprise of the Charlottetown accord debate or of other debates relating to what was called the statut constitutionnel particulier for the province of Quebec or any other special arrangements. There may be a case for these special arrangements, but it is not a matter germane to the discussion today.

What we are concerned with here is a change, a reform, if you wish, a modernization of the process of establishing electoral boundaries in Canada. It is correct to say that we are somewhat undeveloped in constitutional terms in our attitude toward the electoral processes and in the timid way in which we move up to the necessary and inevitable constitutionalizing of the electoral processes. In some other constitutional democracies, some more ancient than our own, others much more recent, the process is fully constitutionalized and there is a role for Parliament that in some senses we seem to be abdicating here. There is no particular problem in Parliament itself establishing electoral boundaries, provided it is governed by a code of constitutional principles, ideally in the constitution itself, and provided there is a full and effective power of judicial review. The progress toward full equality and participatory democracy in the United States has been achieved in just that way.