

*Government Orders*

she was censured for voting contrary to party wisdom. That is not open government; it is authoritarian top-down government.

I know the Liberal member for Vancouver Quadra will agree with me when I say that the monarch in Parliament is sovereign and MPs share in that sovereignty. Members of Parliament should not merely be puppets to their party brass. It is bad policy, it is bad for Parliament, and it is bad for Canada.

Canadians elect MPs to represent their interests in Parliament. It is a shame that the government would not allow its members to exercise that responsibility. The support was there to create a redistribution bill that would meet the needs and wants of the majority of Canadians, but the government brass whipped its members into line to enforce its own agenda.

• (1650)

The Parliament of Canada should not be run in an authoritarian top-down decision making process. Every vote and every committee should not be considered a matter of confidence. Every member should not be forced by the inner circle to toe the line. That kind of practice reduces the House of Commons to nothing more than a grand rubber stamp for what the cabinet has already decided behind closed doors.

I doubt the government had an open caucus debate on these issues before it determined to add seats to the House of Commons and allow the vast population variance differences that are included in Bill C-69. I doubt very much there was a very open debate in the Liberal caucus about this issue. I suspect the decision was made and members of the Liberal caucus were told that they would support Bill C-69. They were probably given four or five talking points to back them up as they were sent out to sell the government agenda.

There was a rare opportunity here to make a positive change to our redistribution system. The government did not allow its members to make those changes in the area of a capped or reduced House to protect the equality of Canadian votes with a tighter variance.

I want to briefly reflect on some of the observations made by the hon. member for Bellechasse. He took it upon himself to give Reformers a lesson in Canadian history. I want to assure the hon. member that Reformers are very aware of the history of our country. We are very proud of our past. We are very proud of all of those from the past who contributed to this country to make it the great country it is.

I would like to remind the hon. member for Bellechasse and others who might share his concern about our understanding of Canadian history there are reasons that people came to this country. They came particularly to my part of the country, the west, and I believe they came to the province of Quebec, Ontario

and Atlantic Canada because they wanted to get away from some things in their country of origin. They wanted to escape repressive regimes. They wanted to escape governments that imposed undemocratic principles upon them.

I am a bit concerned about the Bloc members' position on Bill C-69. They want to impose a principle that in my opinion and the opinion of my Reform colleagues is undemocratic. That is, we would put on the floor of the House of Commons 25 per cent of the seats for one province in this country, regardless of changes in population.

That is why a lot of people left their country, to escape those types of oppressive laws and come to a place where the democratic principles of representation by population were adhered to. I believe that is the principle the people of Quebec adhere to as well. I also believe that is one of the reasons many people in the province of Quebec voted against the Charlottetown accord.

Canadians, both within and outside of Quebec, find it abhorrent that we would call for special status for anyone in this country. It is not a principle that was accepted in the Charlottetown accord. It was repugnant back then and it is repugnant to Canadians today.

We have to ask: Why would they want special status? Why would they want to be guaranteed 25 per cent of the seats of the House of Commons whether their population justified it or not?

I think of two or three arguments that might be put forward. One argument might be that somehow their representatives are not as good as the representatives from other parts of the country and they need that floor and need that protection. I do not accept that argument. Quebecers can send qualified and able members to this House who can represent them adequately, just like we can in the rest of the country. I challenge that argument.

Another argument might be that they are superior to other Canadians and deserve to have 25 per cent of the seats in this House. I reject that argument as well. It is a false argument. We need to look upon each other as equals in this country, equal citizens with equal responsibilities, equal privileges and a law that affects us all in the same manner.

There is one other argument that might be put forth. They might say that they are one of two founding races and somehow that bestows some special privilege upon us. All of us know that the native people were here before those of English or French origin.

This past weekend I was at a breakfast where a Metis leader spoke to us. He brought the point home to us again that in most of this country Canadians do not view Canada as being the home of two founding nations. In particular, if they are one of the first people or of Metis origin, they very much doubt that concept.