

Government Orders

by the commissions themselves, certainly that would draw attention to the House. Perhaps we would have to put forward legislation to suspend the act so that we could review what had taken place to find out if there had been any misproprieties involved in the carrying out of the mandate of the act.

I have heard no such allegations from the government or from anywhere else, for that matter. I have heard a number of members of Parliament who are deeply upset with the results of where the boundaries are drawn. They are not prepared to let the public have input but want to suspend the process before it reaches that point.

Another reason we might want to suppress or suspend the mandate of the act is if it were seeming to violate the Constitution. Supposing they had drawn boundaries in such a way that they violated the Constitution or had changed the numbers of ridings in provinces in such a way that it was against the enactment of our Constitution. Certainly we would have to take action. However that has not happened.

If under the act there had been refusal to allow public input into the process we would have a basis upon which to debate the bill today, but that has not happened. It will happen if the bill is enacted and the suspension takes place because we are at the point where the public hearings are about to take place.

It really concerns me when I hear members of Parliament, particularly from the other side, talking about their ridings, being totally upset with where the boundaries are drawn and saying: "I have to stop this. My riding is not unfolding the way it should". This is before they have had a chance to hear what the public in their ridings are saying and what is the general consensus of the process in each province. Certainly that is not a reasonable approach or reason for suspending the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

● (1245)

If this process had gone way over budget perhaps we should review it, but as I understand there was about \$8 million allocated in this budget to the commissions to do their job. I understand that they are reasonably on track. They have spent about \$5 million to this point and will spend the remaining \$3 million through the public hearing process, a very important process that would be eliminated by the approval of Bill C-18. What a shame to have wasted \$5 million.

I just heard the hon. member on the other side suggest that we needed to pass this act to save money. I cannot understand how investing \$5 million and seeing that all go for nought because the work of the commission ceased to exist and is thrown out

into the garbage heap is in fact good stewardship of taxpayers' dollars. It sounds to me like it would be just the opposite.

As nearly as we can determine, at least there has been no evidence brought forward by the government that there has been a misappropriation of funds or that the commissions have gone severely over their budget. This certainly does not seem to be a reason why we should suspend the act that we are suspending today.

Maybe if they had refused to hold the public hearings we should be introducing the bill that we are introducing today but these public hearings are already scheduled. In the province of Saskatchewan the first one is slated for May 2. Certainly as a member of Parliament I was prepared like any other Canadian citizen to go to that hearing and present my case for changes that I think should be made in my riding of Kindersley—Lloydminster. Like my hon. colleague for Beaver River we are seeing our ridings disappear.

Mine gets divided into three ways. Certainly I would like to make some comments about that but I would respect the wisdom of the public to also have input into what they think the redrawn map of Saskatchewan should look like, especially as it affects my riding of Kindersley—Lloydminster.

Second, perhaps we could look at suspending this act if we had a plan in place to cap seats, a plan to deal with some of the constitutional implications that would take place if we did cap seats. If we had a plan to undertake to provide the provinces with the proper representation in the Parliament of Canada, should in fact capping of the seats mean a reduction of seats for certain provinces?

This plan is not in place. There is nothing in the Liberal red book. There has been no discussion in this session of the House as to what that plan might be. All I have seen is a very broadly based motion that talks about reviewing a number of issues with no definite plan in place.

I would say without this plan the number of seats in this House could be expanded beyond the six that we would see if the current process were allowed to continue. It has happened in the past. This is not a wild accusation by any stretch of the imagination.

The problem is without redistribution the growing provinces are penalized. We cannot continue to expand seats in the House of Commons and so the smaller provinces will be penalized if we do not look at a new process and new way of bringing representation to the Parliament of Canada.

Of course the obvious way to remedy this situation is to reform the Senate. I have not heard one word of Senate reform from members opposite that would give the provinces the