

*Government Orders*

Going back to the bill, another problem in this mix of existing rules left any sort of national standards for the basis of decision making as non-existent. Every boundaries commission made their own set of rules and set guidelines for how they would adjust the boundaries within their area of jurisdiction.

As a result, there was no consistency across Canada. Some constituencies were created under guidelines which took into account normal local trading, economics, social and even religious patterns. Others were created for population or even for political purposes.

This meant that some commissions made changes that were completely unnecessary. They only did so because they were given the opportunity to make changes on rules they established for themselves. The whole matter of unnecessary changes is crazy. I think the committee has recognized that in proposing changes in this bill.

The changes proposed in this legislation will now make public input more useful, consultation more widespread and boundary changes necessary only when warranted by dramatic population shifts. These are definitely changes that have to be made.

I agree that the role of the public must be strengthened because this exercise is ultimately for them. The boundaries on which MPs are elected have an effect on the type of representation the people within those boundaries can expect or should expect. In drawing up those boundaries the needs of those who will be directly affected must be respected.

I also like the principle of "least amount of change" which this bill proposes, although I do not support its retroactivity. The principle of least amount of change means that no boundaries readjustment commission would be appointed when the population does not warrant it. If there is no substantial population change, then there is no new commission, no new work done to adjust boundaries, no public hearings, no new maps or advertising and with that no new expenditure of public money to create something that does not need to be changed. This is a positive element.

For the benefit of my constituents back home in Saskatchewan, as I mentioned earlier, this likely means that there will be no new map for Saskatchewan's federal boundaries. The Battlefords—Meadow Lake constituency created for the 1988 election and which was in place for the 1993 election will likely remain in place for the next federal election whenever that may be.

In conclusion, let me simply say that the changes presented by Bill C-69 do not justify the suspension of the current process and the discarding of the work of so many commissions that was virtually complete. However, the debate has been worthwhile. The changes will improve the process for the future. At the same time, let us not forget there is that bigger picture to look at, a picture that should include a review of the total number of seats in the House, the concept of proportional representation or preferential ballot and the concept of a second chamber of Parliament that is accountable to the people of Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the presentation of our colleague from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake. I think that his position was clear and well put.

I would like to ask him a few questions, perhaps two, particularly on the issue of an elected Senate. But before I get into the subject, I would like to justify, just a little, my participation in the debate.

As a sovereigntist member of Parliament from Quebec, it might seem strange that I would want to get involved in the representation of Canadians in the House of Commons, but it should be well understood that constituents gave us the mandate to be the official opposition in the House. I think that it would have been inappropriate for us not to deal with this issue claiming that it does not concern us.

• (1600)

It concerns us, first, because of the mandate which we received, as I just mentioned, and also because, in view of the association with Canada that we want to promote, it is in our best interests, as Quebecers, to ensure that Canadian Parliament works in the best way possible.

I would like to remind my colleague, whom I was interested to hear mention that the representation of Saskatchewan's members in Parliament would be reduced in the future, why we, in the Bloc Québécois, were moved to present an amendment which was defeated by the House. The aim of this amendment was to ensure that, should Quebec remain in Canada, its representation would never drop below 25 per cent.

Why are we insisting on that figure? I think that this 25 per cent is very small if we consider what we have been. When you come into the lobby of the House of Commons, there is the opposition door and the government door. If you look above the opposition door, you can see two medallions. In one of them, there is Louis XIV and in the other, François I.

Above the government door, you notice two English kings. What does that mean? It means that you can see, carved in stone, what Canada was when we entered Confederation. By the way, we entered Confederation on a vote by the Parliament of what was then Lower Canada. There was no referendum. At the time, Canada was a duality, what people used to call the French Canadian people and the English Canadian people. That is how people saw Canada.

In 1982, Canada changed. Canada was a country with ten equal provinces, and in those provinces there were citizens who were all equal, irrespective of their origins, but that is not really my point. My point is that the nature of the country in which we live was changed and it was done forcibly, and, I may recall, by means of a law passed by the Parliament of England. So this is not exactly conducive to good relations between peoples, and