

We need changes where governments live within their means. Not only the province represented by the Bloc but all of us are staggering under the load of a huge mortgage on our country which is getting bigger every single day. We need a federal system that lives within its means, where we pay for our programs today and we do not offload our spending on to our children. That is what is needed in this country.

We need a country where citizens are treated equally regardless of race, language and culture or where they have their head office. We need a system where all Canadians are treated equally. It is very important that we get those kinds of systemic changes.

I challenge the hon. member not to bring forward bills that suppress legitimate democratic participation but really have solid proposals to get to the root of the problem, fix the system, renew our federation and let us go on together as a country.

**Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, I support my colleague from Don Valley North wholeheartedly in this most welcome legislative initiative, Bill C-229, a bill to amend the Canada Elections Act.

We did not have a mechanism like C-229 in place last October. Now we have a situation in this House where the Official Opposition party is dedicated to a proposition which can tear Canada asunder and whose agenda can monopolize this Parliament and eventually paralyse this government.

The Bloc members have been given all of the privileges and power that go with such a status. This party could constitutionally be called upon to govern the entire nation. How many nation states no matter how democratic or tolerant would accept as their official opposition, even as a legitimate national party, a party whose sole purpose is to rupture the country?

The answer of course is very few unless they have a collective national death wish. Surely it is not too much to ask that any party that aspires to represent Canadian citizens in this federal Parliament should reach out beyond the narrow parochial confines of its regional power base or of its own special interests.

My voters in Nova Scotia elected me to represent the interests of Cumberland—Colchester here in Canada's Parliament. They also expect me to bring a perspective to this job that extends far beyond the boundaries of my riding. After all, the voters of Cumberland—Colchester realize that my salary is paid by all taxpaying Canadians and that as their member of Parliament in this national capital I also have to serve the larger national interests.

In 1982 the former member of Parliament for Hull, Mr. Gaston Isabelle, with incredible foresight introduced Bill C-661 that would have required any party to receive registration in

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Canada to nominate at least 50 candidates in a majority of the provinces.

The purpose of this bill was to, as he put it and I quote: "remove any trace of ambiguity as to the national character of political parties desiring to operate at the federal level".

• (1820)

At second reading in March 1983 Mr. Isabelle noted:

It is easy to understand why a political party, if it wants to operate at the national level, should be obliged to field candidates in a majority of the provinces, that is in five out of six. These are candidates who will be working on the federal scene—Without this obligation, regional or provincial groups, which I prefer to qualify as local, will use Parliament as a platform for their own special interests.

Unfortunately Mr. Isabelle's bill disappeared and died inside a parliamentary committee and 11 years later what he prophesied has come to pass.

We have a chance once again to redress the great deficiencies he saw over a decade ago in the Canada Elections Act. The Bloc Quebecois got its present pre-eminence in this Parliament simply because it received 1.8 million votes that were distributed across the electoral landscape of Quebec only.

It won 54 seats in this Parliament, 54 seats of Quebec's 75, and yet the Bloc did not win the majority of the Quebec vote. There were over 3.7 million valid ballots cast in Quebec and the Bloc won less than 50 per cent, 49.3 per cent in one province only, yet they form the official opposition to the Government of Canada.

Compared to other parties in this House, the Reform Party received over 2.5 million ballots from Canadians in 9 out of 10 provinces and yet won two fewer seats. The Progressive Conservatives received more than 2.1 million votes across Canada yet won only two seats. The Bloc Quebecois based solely on the number of seats won has formed the official opposition of the Government of Canada.

It seems to me that the Bloc's claim to pride of place in the opposition benches based solely on the first past the post outcome is far from secure in terms of either ideal democratic practice or equitable electoral outcome.

No, I am not preaching for some kind of proportional representation to elect our MPs. Given our expansive geography and scattered population it is just not practical. Moreover it has been tried in various forms in various places in Canada in the past and each time has failed as too exotic a graft on the trunk of the Canadian body politic.

My daughter who is a master of political science tells me I must stress the importance of natural democracy rights. That is that we do have rights of the individual to mobilize parties in this country and to participate in government.

However, we must recognize the fact that Canada is very regionally diverse. Extensive country breeds regional political