

Government Orders

for the Bloc to be declaring that Quebec deserves 25 per cent of the seats of the House of Commons regardless of its population.

It was these types of principles and this type of reasoning which defeated the Charlottetown accord. I am disappointed the member for Kingston and the Islands was defending the Charlottetown accord, an accord that demanded a double majority in the Senate based on language and one that also guaranteed Quebec 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. The member cannot have it both ways. He cannot speak against 25 per cent in this House now and then speak in favour of the Charlottetown accord which included those same measures.

Also, the member for Kingston and the Islands and others in this House have suggested that because the Charlottetown accord called for an elected Senate somehow we compromised in our position. I remind all hon. members in this House that we called for a triple E Senate which was not only elected but also had equal representation from each province to overcome the concerns of the province of Quebec. Should its population decline it would have had that protection in the Senate with an equal number of representatives in the upper House, the same as every other province in Canada.

It makes sense. It is the way this country needs to be governed and it is about time that the members in this House from the other parties realized it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to start with, I would like to respond to the Reform Party's contentions. Just because you neglected to come to the defence of your people in Saskatchewan, we do not have to follow suit in Quebec. We were elected to defend the interests of Quebec.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. member please direct his comments through the chair?

Mr. Crête: I will repeat, then, that if the Reform member raised the issue of Saskatchewan, but failed to defend the province as he should have, it is not my problem. We were elected to defend the interests of Quebec and defending the interests of Quebec entails ensuring that we will have a minimum to look forward to, in the future, in Canada.

I have never represented Canada in the House. I represent a riding in Quebec which is part of Canada and I hope that it will cease to be a part of it in the very near future. The Parliament of Canada will be sending a clear message to Quebecers if it decides that Quebec does not deserve 25 per cent of all seats. A message that Canada will give us no minimum guarantees, that

we are not one of the founding peoples and that we do not even deserve 25 per cent of the seats in Parliament.

If Parliament votes against our proposal, it would mean that Quebec deserves less protection than Prince Edward Island, because Prince Edward Island has a guarantee under the constitution. And it does have, for its population, a very large guarantee indeed. And the people of Quebec will always remember this clearly, whether from within the current system or from their own sovereign state.

I invite the Reform Party to come and just try to sell its opinion to Quebec that we do not deserve 25 per cent of the seats. Quebecers will be quite clear in their reply, particularly to Reformers but also to any other party which would come to Quebec with the message that we in Quebec, who founded this country, do not deserve 25 per cent of the seats. I look forward to seeing the day that the Liberals come to Quebec to say that they rejected our proposal.

• (1710)

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands told us earlier that he was very concerned about the legality and constitutionality of this clause. I would urge him to vote on this amendment based on the substance of the issue and to let the Supreme Court determine the validity of the argument. It is not for us to interpret whatever decision the government makes on this issue.

I would also like to remind my colleagues in this House of the remarks made by a true Canadian visionary, Mr. René Lévesque. During the 1970s, Mr. Lévesque said: "If we stay in this system as it is now, we will shrink. With the ever increasing majority, we will always remain a minority and will never have the opportunity to become a nation within this country".

For us, the proposal on the table is the least we need to see if you are ready to treat us on an equal basis in this society and to accept a minimum number of changes.

When the hon. member said earlier that a constitutional amendment might be needed, well, if this is what it takes to guarantee equality to francophones in Quebec and the whole population of Quebec, then it is up to you to introduce it. If you do not, you will be burying your head in the sand and giving Quebecers even less hope for a future within Canada than they have now.

I would like to point out that the first time my grandfather voted in his life, he voted for Laurier. This was the first he voted. He would often tell me this story, and he was very proud of it. The prime minister, then only a candidate, used to travel by train and stop in every municipality on the way. From the last car, he gave a short speech in each municipality, and it was on the basis of this that people voted.