

Government Orders

have not heard of this before. It is called a triple-E Senate. Through representation by population in the House and a triple-E Senate in the other House, we achieve what we want to achieve.

We achieve representation of all provinces equally in Canada and we achieve representation by population in this House without it growing forever. There, I submit most humbly, is my answer to the dilemma that our honourable House faces. How do we go about achieving it? It is simple.

Let us get on with it now. We know how to achieve it. We need to do something about the Senate. We are all in basic agreement with that. We will get representation by population in this House and we can get a triple-E Senate in the other House and we can all go home happy.

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-18 because I believe the present system is detrimental both in general terms to Canadians as a whole and certainly detrimental in specific terms for northern Ontario and for the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka which I represent.

I do not believe that the present system fulfils the mandate that it was given. I would like to read from the terms of reference. It says that "in fixing the electoral district boundaries, they must take into consideration the community of interest or community of identity in or refer to historical patterns of an electoral district and a manageable geographic size for districts in sparsely populated rural or northern regions".

The present system does none of these things. It was simply a mathematical exercise and then a drawing of lines on a map. This does not serve the interests of Canadian people and it certainly does not serve the interests of people in northern Ontario.

I cannot believe that the Reform Party is not supporting this bill. By not supporting this bill and by encouraging the present system, it is encouraging that we will have more members in this House. That is something that it has railed against time and time again.

It is certainly not something that I have heard from my constituents, that they want to expand government and have more government spending. The opportunity to take a second look at this is probably pretty good idea.

I certainly do not think it makes any sense to change approximately 80 per cent of the electoral boundaries that we have in this redistribution process. It seems like we are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is far too extensive. It is costing far too much money and causing far too much disruption.

We need to develop a new system that has public input at a far earlier point. The present system, having redrawn all the boundaries and coming out with a fait accompli and then asking the

public to comment on it, is not the appropriate way of doing it. We need to study it. We need a system that is going to allow the public to have input at a much earlier stage.

• (1800)

I certainly think that history speaks to the problem. The hon. member who spoke before seemed to think that we had been doing okay with the present system and asked why we were trying to change it. I would like to read from John Courtney's book *Parliamentary Representation* wherein he talked about the electoral system in the most recent history:

Since 1964 Parliament has amended the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act seven times; suspended one redistribution in mid-stream; ignored, then replaced, another at the completion of its work; and accepted three different formulae (a different one for each redistribution) for determining the number of seats to be awarded the provinces and the territories. Five starts at electoral redistribution in little more than 20 years suggests that the process has yet to win the measure of support and confidence of parliamentarians needed to ensure its long-term institutional independence.

With all those changes and with all the difficulties that we have had with electoral redistribution in the last 30 years, I do not think support of the present system is appropriate. Indeed we need to go back to the drawing board and look at a better way of doing things.

In addition to the national concerns that I have addressed, I have some very specific concerns as redistribution relates to my area of the country, northern Ontario. It will result in the elimination of two seats in northern Ontario. We have little enough representation as it is now with only 12 seats, but this plan would reduce us to 10 seats. I believe this is unfair. We are a rural area in northern Ontario. We need strong representation. I cannot support a particular system that will see our representation reduced by two.

As the hon. member from the riding of Algoma spoke earlier he described an electoral system that would result in his riding going from Manitoulin Island all the way north to James Bay. It is totally impractical that a member of Parliament could be expected to cover such a large geographic area. The present system that simply divides population on a map and draws lines is totally inappropriate. The plan to reduce northern Ontario down to 10 ridings takes away the collective voice we have in northern Ontario. The system is definitely flawed and needs to be changed.

Then we get to my own particular riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka. It is an area that under this redistribution would be split absolutely in two, with the northern half of my riding going in one direction and the southern half of my riding going in a different direction.

This certainly does not fulfil the mandate of the electoral commission which was to take into account historical, social and economic realities of the situation. The riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka has existed for 60 years, and in one fell swoop of a pen on a map there is a proposal to destroy it and to split it in two. I cannot accept that.