

Government Orders

I want to read from the bill that is currently before us. It talks about a community of interest.

Mr. Forseth: You are making the Liberals squirm now.

Mr. Schmidt: I quote clause 19(5) of the bill:

For the purposes of paragraph 2(b), "community of interest" includes such factors as the economy, existing or traditional boundaries of electoral districts, the urban or rural characteristics of a territory, the boundaries of municipalities and Indian reserves, natural boundaries and access to means of communication and transport.

• (1200)

That is a good phrase. That is a good section. That means the interests of the people should be paramount.

However, there are other provisions in the bill which make us wonder whether they really mean that. When it gets into the business of consulting with people there seems almost to be a blockage. The boundaries commissions which are asked to do the redrawing of the boundaries are required to hold at least one hearing per province.

That is an insult to the large provinces like Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. One hearing will actually determine the boundaries of the municipalities, look at the economic interests, look at the differences between rural and urban ridings? Somebody in downtown Vancouver will say what the characteristics are of Vermilion in Alberta, in Kamloops or in Prince George? It is ludicrous.

There have to be some real directions given to the commissions which will mean they will actually consult with the people.

There are some interesting technicalities in the bill. In section 21(6) there is the provision as to how one goes about making a presentation to the commission. This is for ordinary people, people who apparently do not understand anything about boundaries, people who do not know how they will be affected. That is an insult of the first order.

There is a greater insult in here which says a commission shall, before completing a report, hold at least one hearing in the province for which the commission is established for representation by interested persons. Notice of that commission hearing must be given 60 days before the actual hearing is to take place and the application to appear before the commission must be in writing. The application must be not more than 57 days before the hearing. Let us examine that. The notice must be given 60 days before the hearing and the person may make application up to 57 days before that date.

Let us look at another section to see what happens. Section 22(6) states:

No representation by an interested person shall be heard by a commission at a hearing held under this section unless notice in writing is received by the commission not later than seven days before the hearing is held,

Which section will apply? In one instance it can be three days before the hearing but in the other it cannot happen unless it has been at least seven days. That is an inconsistency.

We have a person who wants to make a representation and he reads one of those sections of the bill. He has to read more than one section to find out how he goes about actually notifying the commission that he wants to make a presentation.

Another principle of democracy has been violated. There were amendments to the bill presented by the Senate. The Senate is not an elected body. It is an appointed body by none other than the Prime Minister. The Senate in this case has stopped the legislation. It has made some amendments to legislation which was created by people who were elected to represent the people. This is wrong in principle. It is a violation of what I have learned democracy should be. Our tradition and our Constitution says the Senate has this kind of power. Does that make it right? Does that make it just? I submit it does not.

• (1205)

The Reform Party wants to reform the democratic system. One of those reformations is to have an elected Senate, to make sure those persons in the second Chamber do represent the people.

There is a very valuable service and function for the second Chamber to perform in this House, to provide sober second thought which it did in this case. It did make some amendments that were very useful and that we can support. That is good and shows the upper house can be an important part of the democratic process but it ought to be elected, just like the House of Commons. I certainly hope it will be.

The upper house ought to balance the representation that exists in this House. It ought to make sure the very highly and densely populated centres of the country are balanced against those not as well populated and therefore the interests of both parties can be served in a balanced fashion. A major reformation needs to take place here.

People have said they want smaller government and also less intrusion in their lives. A bill will be coming before the House very shortly, Bill C-88. It provides in section 9 for the cabinet to suspend, modify or extend the application of a federal law or provincial law. The House and provincial legislators have the right to make laws. It is their responsibility. The people have elected them to do that.

Within a bill coming before the House that power on certain issues will be taken away from the House, and deposited with the cabinet. That is a miscarriage of misrepresentation, a miscarriage of responsibility, a miscarriage of anything that I believe and understand about a democratic system.