

*Government Orders*

Other important factors which must be taken into account are activity and industrial sectors. For example, this week, we had an opposition day on agriculture. If we move closer to basing representation purely on demographic considerations, the impact of the agricultural sector will be reduced, the impact of MPs representing such ridings will also be reduced, and even society as a whole will be negatively affected because agriculture has an impact on the population as a whole.

Therefore, we must ensure that we continue to be able to take into account this kind of sector. That is why it seems to me that the current bill lacks nuance and subtlety in the way that the boundaries of ridings can be determined. That was one aspect that I wanted to discuss, but there is another—and it was perhaps the greatest disappointment during the entire consideration of the bill—the Liberal majority's refusal to grant Quebec a minimum of 25 per cent of all of the seats in the House of Commons.

I equated this behaviour with someone slamming the door on another person, an egotistical act committed by the majority and a sort of negation of the fact that Canada has two founding peoples. Initially, in this House, two founding peoples created this country. Through immigration policies and the way that the provinces were created, Quebecers, the first explorers of this vast continent, will become a smaller and smaller minority as time goes by if they choose to stay in Canada, a choice which will mean that they will be a minority without any real impact compared to the position they have had in North America for centuries.

• (1640)

I believe that this tendency to reduce Quebec to a minority reflects the same attitude that gave us the unilateral patriation of the Constitution. There is some consistency there. In the same way as Quebec Liberal members were not very proud of patriation in 1982—and were reminded of that during the 1984 election—the Quebec people told them that they were not very pleased with their vote on this amendment. We were very surprised to see Quebec Liberal members vote against our amendment which, basically, was to guarantee a minimum representation in the House.

I believe that it is something that all Quebecers will remember for a long time. They will remember it, in particular, when they have to decide whether they want to become a country or not, and one of the reasons for their choice will be that they have no hope of regaining the place they had in this country, given that they are refused even this small guarantee of survival.

The refusal to make the Magdalen Islands a special case, and consider it a separate riding, is another disappointment, even if it does not have the same national significance. This shows a lack of sensitivity and in that regard I should mention that the

Quebec Electoral Law considers the Magdalen Islands as a separate riding, outside the norm for other ridings. At the federal level, this riding has existed in the past, but later the islands were joined with either Gaspé or Bonaventure.

This puts the member who represents this area in a very awkward position, since there are very distinct interests. This is clear when you consider the territory to be covered and the isolation of the place, and also when you consider its relationship with other Canadian communities surrounding the Gulf. I find the decision not to recognize the islands as a separate riding regrettable, because a member representing solely the islands could have made a very interesting contribution. This does not mean that there could not be in Canada some other exceptions of that kind, which could be given special recognition.

The reason I am against this bill is that the provincial commissions which will be established to readjust the electoral boundaries will have to apply the three following criteria: community of interest, reasonable size, and significant population increase over the next five years. This is the exact opposite of the argument I presented to the committee when I said: "Would it not make sense, when considering eliminating a riding, to give it the opportunity to continue being represented in the House of Commons until the next census and, if it shows that the population is still dropping, to eliminate it then but only then?"

The situation is reversed; for a riding to be exempt, one must forecast a significant increase in the population of the area over the next five years. This flies in the face of regional development. For instance, eastern Quebec has seen its population drop for the last 10 to 15 years as a result of deliberate policies on the part of centralizing governments which have pushed people to leave the area in search of a job.

For the past few years, all the economic stakeholders have been working hard to reverse this trend. It will take a few years. Demographers say that it will take another 10 years, if the measures being implemented are successful. But, if in the meantime, you take away their ability to be represented, you are thwarting the efforts of the people who want to develop that particular part of the country.

Therefore, I believe that electoral boundaries commissions should have to consider other criteria over and above the three I already mentioned, namely: community of interest, reasonable size, and significant population increase over the next five years.

• (1645)

I have already listed them, but the main ones are the economic profile of a region, its size, the number of municipalities of which it is comprised and geographic unifying factors. These are all factors that should be considered and would, in my