

Government Orders

matter of principle I am against it even though I stand to lose as well through this process.

My dealings with Elections Canada have always been very good. I have run in two general federal elections as well as one byelection in the spring of 1989. Even though I was treated as somebody who was almost literally a kook in western Canada because I represented a new political party that nobody had ever heard about and nobody knew anything about it, I must say the people at Elections Canada were most fair with me in the general election of 1988 and in the byelection of 1989 when we surprised Elections Canada and the whole country of Canada from sea to sea when I took 50 per cent of the vote.

Since then obviously my party has gained a great deal of strength and steam across the country. When I ran as only one of 200 and some candidates in the general election of 1993 we had undergone the process which is very general and very basic. People were appointed as returning officers in their constituencies. We underwent that in Beaver River because the previous returning officer had retired. We were subject to a new returning officer, Mr. Lorne Assheton-Smith from St. Paul. Those are political appointments, as we all know. I will send this comment in *Hansard* to Mr. Lorne Assheton-Smith, the returning officer from Elections Canada in Beaver River, indicating that he treated me fairly as a candidate and I have absolutely no criticism whatsoever of Elections Canada.

The criticism I would have is not of the whole situation. Maybe it is political to an extent with the Electoral Boundaries Commission, but the question on everybody's lips is: if they think they are replacing Tory hacks with something better, heaven help government members who are ramrodding the legislation through. They will do so at their own peril if they replace them with hacks of another political party who they think might serve their interests better. I think all of us would be ashamed to see that happen.

[Translation]

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Madam Speaker, I can assure the hon. member for Beaver River that we certainly will not do what she assumes we will do when it is time to appoint people to these commissions, because this is a very independent process, and we certainly intend to abide by this principle.

However, if I remember correctly what she said in her speech a few days ago, she did not entirely agree with the current process. She also said that in her presentation to the commissions, she would also express her dissatisfaction and mention certain changes she would like to see.

She invited her constituents to do likewise. The hon. member must know that the commission appointed to review the boundaries of her electoral district does exactly that, in other words, it receives submissions on new or existing boundaries and is not at all concerned with the current process.

• (1125)

My point is that if the hon. member comments on the process, it will be a waste of time. Giving hon. members an opportunity to do so, and the public as well, because the committee that reviews the entire process will certainly ask members of the public to come and testify, is the whole purpose of this bill.

[English]

Miss Grey: Madam Speaker, we are talking about particulars the commission has come up with. Yes, I make no bones about it. I think there are real weaknesses in that and I think Beaver River deserves a longer life than it has had.

As I mentioned in my remarks the other day, it was a brand new constituency in 1988. Will it just evaporate into thin air? I do have problems with that. We have had negotiations with the government but I have no guarantees. What guarantee do I have that the system the government is talking about will be better? It has not given us any options. It has not said that it wants to move in this direction.

Yes, it makes me nervous. I am not going to sign on to something with my party and say: "Sure, let us come up with something that may be just as politically motivated". Canadians would be really frustrated with that. Even though I am frustrated with the proposals that are in place and I said that I would be going to the hearings, I suspect now I am not going to have a chance when I see the government bringing in time allocation. If it is talking about the process it wants to take part in being so important, why do we need to have it shot through Parliament faster than the speed of light?

I sat in the House and my friend from the riding of Kamloops has sat here too, listening to dozens upon dozens of members who are on the government side now screaming against the Tories last time all the dreadful things about time allocation. I can hardly believe it when I look across the aisle now. Is this the most important thing in Canada right now? Is this what this government is going to be proud of down the road? Will it be saying: "This is what we forced time allocation on. The biggest issue of the day was electoral boundaries"? I hardly think so.

I wanted a guarantee that some better process would be in place. If this is going to take place, as I suspect the government will be ramming it through, I would like a guarantee as a Canadian citizen and as a member of Parliament in the House that whatever changes the government makes it may grandfather them and put them into the life of the next Parliament after this