

Government Orders

on our calculators and save a lot of money. But when a riding is as small as six blocks of Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver versus 55 or 60 municipalities, like my riding, Berthier—Montcalm, should other criteria not be taken into consideration to ensure that the citizens of these ridings are as well represented in Parliament as those of urban downtown ridings in big cities?

The suggested changes addressed this issue, but, as I said earlier, the snub on Quebec that this bill contains is totally unacceptable. In fact, and I will close on this note, Bill C-69 gives no mandate in this area and it could easily have given one to some parliamentary committee. I think that it is not the means to resolve the problem of Quebec's dwindling representation in the House of Commons that is lacking.

Worse yet, Bill C-69 gives no guarantee that the continual reduction in the number of members in this House from Quebec will be halted. On the contrary, the bill maintains the formula set out in section 51 of the British North America Act, which results in a weakening of Quebec's influence within federal institutions.

You will understand that, as long as the people of Quebec have not made a decision on their future, which will certainly be in favour of sovereignty, it is very important that Quebec maintains adequate representation within federal institutions.

I disagree with some of the comments which the Reform member made and I think that, given that we are here to defend the interests of Quebec, we are here to play to win from within the system and we will do everything possible to guarantee Quebec minimum representation, and demanding 25 per cent is a way of guaranteeing Quebec a minimum impact on decisions made in this House.

We are not demanding this because they say we are going to lose the referendum, on the contrary, we are going to win it. However, I think that, at the very least, a member who represents the interests of Quebec had an obligation to present this motion, to guarantee Quebecers the 25 per cent we have always had since Confederation and which we will lose in the next election because of a Liberal government that failed to make any provisions for this in the bill.

All Quebecers, whether or not they agree on sovereignty, agree that Quebec should at least keep 25 per cent. And since everyone likes Quebecers or at least that is what they say, we should be able to get unanimous consent in this House.

I want to ask the Liberal members from Quebec and the government to rescind the previous vote so that we can have a bill that reflects the unanimous demands of Quebecers, including Quebec federalists with their stuffed beaver policy, as some radio commentators refer to Daniel Johnson's policy.

• (1330)

Even Liberal members from Quebec—and I see some members across the way who were in the National Assembly before and are very much aware of Daniel Johnson's political allegiance—even Mr. Johnson said yes, Quebec should have at least 25 per cent. I think Quebecers are unanimous on this.

I am sure there is some formula we could use in this House to rescind the vote at the report stage and include the motion presented by the Bloc Québécois. I think that, all things considered, after everything we read in the papers and all the pressure on the Liberals across the way in connection with the Bloc's motion, which was entirely legitimate, I am sure there is some way to rescind this vote and guarantee 25 per cent of the seats for Quebecers.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

How does he see the role of members from Quebec who support this bill? Does he think that members from Quebec who support this bill are defending Quebec's interests?

Mr. Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer this question without commenting—I think there is a rule about this—on how Liberal members from Quebec voted.

However, as I said in my speech, if a member from from Quebec who was elected by Quebecers is truly here to defend their interests, that member cannot do otherwise but vote in favour of this motion which would guarantee 25 per cent of the seats. We did not ask for the moon. We did not ask for exceptional powers. We wanted this bill to recognize the fact that Quebec was one of the two founding peoples. It was that simple. It was easy to do. They could have put it in the bill.

I think the Liberals from Quebec understand this. They could have put it in the bill if they had done some lobbying, something Liberals are very good at. The members from Quebec could have lobbied their own caucus and their own ministers to include in this bill a clause mandating a group of parliamentarians to find a way to let Quebec have 25 per cent of the seats as requested by us, the Bloc Québécois and by all Quebecers. But they did not. I think the answer to the question from the hon. member for Québec-Est is clear. I think the interests of Quebec demanded it and that they failed to act accordingly.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.