

Supply

• (1815)

Young people wonder how unelected senators can block bills like the GST. Remember that big debate. They blocked the drug patent bill, and once again very recently, we have the example of Bill C-18. The House of Commons and this government proposed postponing consultations on redrawing the electoral maps. The bill went to the Senate and the Senate asked us to reconsider our position. That is not the issue today, but we realize that it is a source of delay which slows down the work of the House of Commons.

You know, this federal system is already complicated for Quebecers. They already see it as double representation and duplication. I will not take you through this whole scenario again, but you see that the Senate duplicates what the House of Commons is doing. The triple E was mentioned, but I see it as a threefold exercise of political power and you can understand that young people, who already find it difficult to be interested in politics in this state of affairs, find this situation triply complicated and even more repulsive.

The Senate should act as a social conscience, but how can it play this role when senators are appointed by political parties and constantly surrounded by lobbyists. Some senators even sit on the boards of private companies. The various possible conflicts of interest are not considered. What about openness? Furthermore, senators now represent two political parties. Furthermore, the majority of senators currently belong to two political parties, one of which has almost been wiped out in the House of Commons. How can we explain such a situation to a young person interested in politics and tell him that the Senate is open to the future, when, in fact, the exact opposite is closer to the truth. I personally have difficulty explaining that situation, and I think it is also the case for any member of this House, regardless of the region which he or she represents, even outside Quebec. How can we claim that senators are representative of the different regions of Quebec and Canada when other political parties are present in those regions?

In the minute that I have left, I simply want to remind everyone of the extremely difficult context in which young Canadians and Quebecers find themselves right now. Last year, Gilles Lesage, who is a journalist for the daily *Le Soleil*, referred to the Senate as a nuisance costing \$50 million a year. This comment was not made by a politician, but by a journalist, an editorialist.

Remember the debate held last July, when it was thought that Quebecers and Canadians were on holidays and that they would not notice anything. Senators wanted to vote themselves a futher \$6,000 allowance.

Our young people see that senators have very good pension plans and working conditions, while they themselves are unemployed and worried about their future. Under the circumstances, is it really a surprise that a resolution from a group of young people interested in politics proposed, at the beginning of February, that the Senate be abolished. I certainly can understand them.

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather surprising that Bloc members are telling us we should not have the other House and they are trying to remove the funding from the other House. They comment on how ineffective the other House is, when they sit here trying to destroy this House and this country. They talk about the ignorance of the people in Quebec and that they do not understand the other House.

• (1820)

Why do they not take the opportunity to go back to the province of Quebec and tell people what a wonderful institution this Parliament is in both Houses? Why not take the opportunity to tell people how much better off they would be if they remained in this country? Why not do that rather than saying: "We are not aware of what goes on there. Therefore it is irrelevant and does not matter, so why not set up our own institution in Quebec City?"

Why does the hon. member and his colleagues not take the opportunity to make this institution work, both Houses that is? Why does he not take the opportunity to make this institution work, rather than thinking they are better off to pack their bags, walk out and destroy this institution and everything it stands for, thinking they would set up something better in Quebec City? What does the hon. member say to that?

[Translation]

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to be surprised. The questions and comments of my colleague from the Reform Party express a particular point of view.

We have a debt of over \$500 billion. In the six months I have been in this place, I have heard almost every day Reform Party members say that we must cut our expenses, that the way we are overspending does not make sense. On that I agree with you. We have to find ways to reduce expenditures.

What we must consider today is not the abolition of the Senate, but rather the funds requested by the Senate. Until there is a referendum on sovereignty and until the majority of Quebec-