

Supply

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the comments made by the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, but I was surprised by his attack on the Senate.

[English]

I remember in the last Parliament that the House was not full but had a great number of Conservative MPs from the province of Quebec sitting on the other side who were staunch supporters of the Senate. My recollection is that members of his party who used to be Conservatives—apparently they either saw some light or went blind, I am not sure which; either way they fell off the path and landed on another—or supporters of Mr. Mulroney and his government supported the Senate. They supported it so much they stuffed it full of good Tories.

We know this happened during the last Parliament. We know it was supported by Conservative members of Parliament, many of whom were from the province of Quebec and never said a word in the House about their electors wanting to get rid of the Senate. Now we hear this is the popular rage in his province. I do not recall hearing raised during the last election campaign anywhere in Canada that the Senate was the subject of extensive discussion, either in Quebec or elsewhere.

I am very surprised to hear the hon. member telling us today that everyone in his province is in favour of abolition of the Senate when this patently was not the case until at least October 25, 1993. Has something happened that has changed the minds of Quebecers? I am interested to know what it is that in his view has resulted in this—

[Translation]

—about-face, as we say, which changed the opinion of all his constituents.

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for his very pertinent question regarding the comments I just made and the fact that the vast majority of Quebecers, if not all of them, are in favour of abolishing the Senate. The hon. member says that he has doubts about my statement, since the Conservative members who formed the previous government were in favour of the Senate, and in fact their government appointed many Conservative senators to protect its interest in the Upper House.

• (1705)

The answer is quite simple: You only have to look at the results of the election held on October 25, 1993. There is only one Conservative member left in this House.

An hon. member: Two.

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): No, I mean to represent Quebec. Quebec has only one Conservative member who, somewhat like senators, was appointed leader of the Conservative Party without being elected to that position. There is the answer. On October 25, 1993, Quebecers made a choice based on their interests; they made a choice based on what they really thought of federal institutions, and this is why they sent 54 Bloc Québécois members to represent them in this House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): I can see why the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands may have some doubts. This is exactly what we said during the election campaign, last October, and what we are repeating day after day in this House. For over 125 years now, Quebecers have been elected to represent their fellow citizens in this House and to talk to the rest of Canada. This time, there are, in this House, people who do not want to be appointed to the Senate under any consideration. We simply want to tell our friends from English Canada what Quebecers want. And what they want is to have their own country; they want to set up their own institutions, and this is why I say once again that Quebecers in general are not only in favour of abolishing the Senate, but are even in favour of abolishing their own representation in this House.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the subject of the appropriation of certain votes, and especially the \$26.9 million allocated to the Senate for the 1994–95 fiscal year. I think it is high time this government realized that sound government management starts with more prudent and especially more efficient management of taxpayers' money.

I think it is useless to allocate \$26.9 million to the Senate for program spending, an amount that will be added to the \$15 million it will receive directly in the course of the current fiscal year and to another \$12 million in services provided by various federal departments and agencies to maintain an institution that has absolutely no connection with how a modern democracy operates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government, on a point of order.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I feel I must refer to Standing Order 18, because I am afraid the hon. member went too far. The text reads as follows, and I quote: