

Supply

• (1605)

I would like to remind you that the current distribution of the 104 Senate seats is provided for in Section 22 of the 1867 Constitution Act. As Canada is divided into four regions, these regions must be equally represented. Ontario and Quebec get 24 senators each; New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, six each; Prince Edward Island, four; the four Western provinces, six each for a total of 24; in 1948, Newfoundland got six; finally, the two territories have one each.

Senators are appointed by the Governor General who, according to tradition, acts on the initiative and advice of the Prime Minister. Everyone recognizes that they are in fact appointed by the Prime Minister.

Since senators are not elected, and the hon. member directly alluded to that fact, the Bloc Quebecois feels that the other place is an anachronism, as the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra put it so well, given the modern criteria which underly the political management of a State.

So, on behalf of my colleagues from the Bloc Quebecois, I denounce this unacceptable waste in the form of a credit of \$26.9 million, plus statutory expenditures of some \$15.7 million, for a total budget of \$42.6 million, not including the services provided. This is an unacceptable expenditure for an archaic political institution which plays a useless role for Quebecers and Canadians at large.

Let me remind you of the origin of senates in the various political systems, and of the objectives of the Canadian Senate when it was created. This will give you a better idea of how that institution is a miserable failure in the Canadian political system.

Let us take a look at history. In ancient Greece, more than 500 years before Christ, the legislators formed a council of the 500, whose role was to control the possible excesses of democracy. The very ancient societies had the wisdom to create a political body to monitor decisions concerning society as a whole. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra alluded to this earlier. On one of the walls of the Canadian Senate, there is a maxim by Cicero, who was a thinker in Ancient Rome, to the effect that it is the duty of the noble to oppose the instability of the people. How pretentious!

From time immemorial, when democracy was still in its infancy, people sought to give an aura of wisdom to the Senate, in order to legitimize this institution, whose mission is fundamentally a conservative one for society.

The Senate is like the British House of Lords; it is a House for very important people. True to the British tradition, the accent is on sharing legislative power among the two Houses, which represent two different social classes, that is the people and the nobility.

The first objective of the Senate, like its British model, is to review and think, thus monitoring the House of Commons. This is very close to the perception that prevailed in antiquity. Senate members are supposed to counterbalance the executive side of Parliament. Moreover, the Fathers of Confederation also wanted to follow the American model and created a Canadian Senate similar to a federal Chamber whose objective was to protect the rights of the regions and provinces, and to ensure its participation in the legislative process of the Federation.

The founders of the Canadian Upper House took their inspiration both from the British House of Lords and the American Senate, two models that were clearly incompatible and light years away from any historical affinity. The House of Lords, anchored in the medieval myth of the monarchy, and the Senate, with its modern North American dynamics firmly anchored in the twentieth century. This was a highly unsuitable marriage between a modern American Senate and a medieval British system.

We must not forget that the criteria for representation from Quebec and Ontario, at the time the Canadian Constitution was drafted, were included at the behest of Lower Canada—in other words, Quebec—in exchange for agreeing with the principle of proportional representation in the House of Commons.

• (1610)

In the minds of the founding fathers, the Senate was intended to provide equitable representation for the regions. However, it was never intended as a house of the regions. Today, there is no reason why the House of Commons should appropriate funds to a political institution that is ineffective and totally useless.

Considering the state of the economy, with a debt of over \$550 billion and unemployment and poverty in Quebec and Canada, the total budget of \$42.6 million allocated to this institution would be better spent on economic recovery and job creation.

To continue this discourse on the failure of successive federal governments to provide for responsible management of public funds, as they sank millions into an institution that is utterly useless, I would like to give two examples of a functional Senate; the U.S. Senate and the German Bundesrat referred to by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Unlike the Canadian Senate, the American model—the first federal model on this continent—is unique in its simplicity. In the House of Representatives, representation is based on numbers, while in the Senate, it is based on absolute equality among the States.

A description of the duties of U.S. senators demonstrates how ineffective and useless members of the Canadian Upper House really are. Here is why American senators have specific legislative duties that are essential to the proper functioning of the American presidential system. Thus, in conjunction with the House of Representatives, they pass bills previously approved by the President. If no compromise can be reached, the bill is not passed. They also have executive functions whose importance is