

*Government Orders*

I call that electoral manipulation, actual election fraud and dishonest. Today they are trying to go even further than that by holding a phoney referendum based on a phoney bill. The process that has been going on here for three days is a monumental farce. They want to silence all hon. members by having less than 10 hours of debate on something as important as a referendum on the future of Canada and Quebec.

That is unacceptable. This lack of will, fair play and honesty towards all the citizens of Canada and Quebec is of course the reason why Canadians no longer trust this government today. Quebecers no longer believe in it. Less than 15 per cent of the people today believe this government because it lies to them every day. It is a government that says absolutely anything.

Nevertheless, I remind you that just in terms of the democratic process, the Prime Minister, as I told you, promised popular financing on November 15, 1988. A general convention of more than 1,000 Conservative Party members voted unanimously in favour of it on March 25, 1988. The by-election won by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean in June 1988 was another obvious demonstration of the popular financing that Prime Minister Mulroney still approved of throughout the 1988 election campaign.

At the first proposed public consultation since the 1988 general election, a referendum, how can the government suggest that companies will be able to form as many committees as they want and give as much money as they want and, even worse, that some funds will never be accounted for, that there will be no disclosure and that none of the fundamental rules of the electoral process recognized in all civilized, democratic countries will apply? How could we have reached such a point in Canada today?

Are we so afraid of talking about the real issues? The real issue today is the constitutional problem. The real issue is the future of Quebec, because Quebec wants to be sovereign. Is Canada prepared to use any completely undemocratic means to try to come up with something else and think that Canadians and Quebecers will go along with it? It is utterly impossible! It is unthinkable.

Personally I am not against a referendum bill. It would be normal for a government to have that kind of tool, to

follow very well established democratic rules that correspond pretty closely to those that apply in an election. But holding a referendum only on the Constitution is a different story. Passing special legislation to hold a referendum on the Constitution is a lie and a joke. That basically is what offends me.

If the government had tabled a referendum-bill, based on democratic principles, that could be applied to the Constitution or other questions, eventually, like the legislation we have in Quebec, with some nice, clear-cut rules, an umbrella committee for the yes side, and another one for the no side, a ceiling on contributions, no union or corporate contributions, complete disclosure of all donors and a number of other democratic measures, of course I would have supported it. I think, however, that Quebecers should realize what this government is trying to do.

By the way, I see only one Quebec member of the Progressive Conservative Party in the House right now, one out of 54 or 55. I can tell that particular member that there are no —

• (1620)

**Mr. Weiner:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it is entirely uncalled for to mention the presence or absence of members of this House. There is nothing wrong, either way. However the hon. member just said there was only one Quebec member in the House, but I also happen to be a member from Quebec.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Pappas):** The hon. member has been around here for a long time and he realizes that he should not be saying who is in the House and who is not in the House. There are television cameras outside. There are committees meeting. I will recognize the hon. member for Mégantic-Compton—Stanstead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérin:** After the next election we will not have to count to see how many Conservative members are left in the House. There will not be any left, and that will take care of that. I suppose it would be the same, whether they come from Quebec or Alberta. I am just joking. I do not know that much about Alberta. In any case, we will take care of Quebec.