

Supply

the riding of Frontenac, I am sure the list of applicants would be very long.

To prove to you to what extent the Senate is unknown in Quebec, I will give you the results of a poll I conducted in my riding, in July of last year, with some of my assistants. We asked some people in the riding about the Senate, to find out what they knew. We crisscrossed the riding of Frontenac, from Thetford to Plessisville, from Coleraine to East Broughton, via Saint-Jacques-de-Leeds, Sainte-Agathe and Saint-Sylvestre. We visited grocery stores, credit unions, shopping centres, gas stations, etc. In fact, we went everywhere we could find people.

We wanted to measure how voters reacted to the Senate, and to find out whether they knew any senators. I can tell members opposite that I heard many sighs and saw many skyward looks.

• (1750)

Many told us straight out that the Senate was useless, or that it was a circus manned by people appointed by the government as a reward. We asked those who were more receptive whether they knew any senators and could name some. Only two names out of 104 came up, and not very often. They were Solange Chaput-Rolland and Jacques Hébert. Considering their past achievements, it is clear that their notoriety did not come from the fact that they were senators.

Ordinary people do not see how the Senate could possibly help them. They only see a group of individuals appointed for reasons sometimes obscure, on whom they never call to defend their interests. As one of my constituents pointed out to me, it is difficult enough for people to know if they have to go to their provincial or their federal MP for a particular problem. They just do not want to bother finding out what a senator can do for them.

Last year, I polled the people of my riding on their knowledge of the Canadian Senate and on their reactions to the \$6,000 non-taxable raise that the senators had voted for themselves, as hon. members will all remember, especially the members opposite. A \$6,000 non-taxable increase is worth about \$12,000. Do you know that, in my riding, many people work 50 weeks a year and barely earn \$12,000? It is outrageous.

As the hon. member for Joliette was saying earlier, public opinion has been the senators' watchdog. During the three weeks following this shameful decision by the senators, public opinion in Quebec and in Canada ran heavily against them and they had to undo what they had done.

My colleague from Terrebonne gave some examples of outrageous expenditures, like the senator who had his office remodelled at a cost of more than \$100,000. I built myself a very good house for about half that amount. There are some Canadian families, and I use the word Canadian to please the members opposite, who cannot afford a \$60,000 house. Yet, the senator had his office remodelled for double that amount and more.

We will have a provincial election in Quebec in a few months and I invite my colleagues across the way to come and defend the Senate during that election campaign. They will see what Quebecers think of the Senate.

To illustrate my point, I will tell you that when the hon. Marcel Masse was representing my riding in the House, I phoned his office to inquire about the name of the senator responsible for our region. Of course, I did not talk to Mr. Masse personally, but I talked to highly qualified individuals with eight or nine years' experience since that was at the end of the Conservative regime. Believe it or not, no one in his constituency office could give me an answer. After waiting for many days, someone finally called me back to give me the name of my representative in the Senate, but I have since forgotten that name.

• (1755)

Again last night, my assistant here, Manon Genest, called the Senate communications service to know which senator was responsible for my riding, Frontenac. "We will call you back" was the answer. This is a fine example of the active involvement of senators in political life! When even the communications service of the Senate itself cannot give the name of our representative right away, frankly, I must tell you that that does nothing to give me confidence in the other Chamber.

If I ask the hon. member sitting next to me what riding he represents, I am sure that it will not take him 20 minutes to give me the answer. He knows. If I call the House of Commons to know what riding Antoine Dubé represents, they will tell me immediately.

An hon. member: The hon. colleague.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): My hon. colleague, to be more precise.

We also asked the people we met to tell us what they remembered the most about what the Senate did. Among the older age group, some people mentioned Senator Hébert's hunger strike. That stayed in people's minds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I have to interrupt to indicate whether names are to be used or not. Early in the hon. member's speech, I agreed that names be mentioned since he was conveying the results of a survey he had done in his riding. I thank him for the fact that in a later part of his speech he did not mention parliamentarians by their names but by their designations instead. I hope we will abide by this rule up till the end of this debate. The hon. member for Frontenac.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the patience you always show and for the thoughtful manner in which you correct us. You do it so well that in my turn I would like to beg your pardon for having mentioned the senator by name. I will therefore skip a few paragraphs to conclude with the way our famous senators are appointed.