

Supply

yes we have changed in this House? I feel the operation of the other place is likely going to change as well.

I would like to know from him what his feelings are with regard to this whole implementation of the 35th Parliament and the voting procedure and free votes that will come forward.

Mr. Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and his questions. I think they are valid comments. Certainly there has been significant change in this House. I believe there could in fact be significant change in the other place.

I have to agree however with some of my colleagues from the opposition party when they talk about a policy and the Senate. I believe and we believe that we have to abolish some aspects of the Senate such as the appointments, the perks, the pay and pensions and those types of things.

Yes I was in attendance for the free vote the member speaks of. I congratulate the government for those types of initiatives. I think that is long overdue in this country. I do applaud that.

I look forward to more of those same types of things. If we openly look at the Senate, how it is created, what the process is and how it works I really do not see any other answer other than to make the thing effective. That is the only hope I see for thinly populated areas of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party member who just spoke about the Senate expressed very interesting views. His determination to stand up for the regions was one aspect of his speech that I found particularly striking.

I have here the list of Quebec senators with their mailing address. At the moment, Quebec is lucky enough to have 21 senators. Being myself a representative of a large riding far from the big urban centres, I insist on the rights of regions. If really the Senate is that important, our regions—Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the North Shore, the Gaspé Peninsula—should also have a senator to represent them adequately. According to this list, of these 21 senators, 13 are from the Montreal area. There is one whose address is Laval-sur-le-Lac. I wonder if he would not also be from the Montreal area.

An hon. member: That is in the Montreal area.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): I am told it is in the Montreal area. In Quebec, 14 senators represent the Montreal region. Is this a good regional representation?

Could the member tell us if, in his home province, regions are well represented in the Senate? I can tell him that in Quebec, I seriously question the value of the Senate as champion of the regions. I think it is not very effective, on that score.

[English]

Mr. Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate this question and comment from the hon. member. In fact he makes my case exactly. I would rest my case saying that has been the problem with the Senate. There is very unequal representation.

Fortunately for the member there are 21 senators from Quebec. We do not have that luxury in Saskatchewan simply because we are a thinly populated area.

• (1650)

Having said that, I also believe that an equal number of senators for each province will rectify that problem. Certainly the member will know that if there were to be two to four senators from his province that he should have equal or good representation, the same number as Ontario, Saskatchewan or any other province would have.

I understand the problem with the regional unfairness and the regional representation that is currently not happening.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to advise the House that as of now, the official opposition will be splitting its time into ten-minute, rather than twenty-minute periods.

I would like to begin my presentation by recounting an anecdote which, to my mind, clearly reflects Quebecers' feelings about the Senate, because it is a fact that virtually the entire population favours and indeed has long been advocating the abolition of the Senate.

This anecdote involves the one-time Quebec legislative council which my colleague from Frontenac referred to moments ago and which was abolished in the late 1960s. However, while the council still existed, more specifically during the 1950s, Maurice Duplessis who was then premier appointed Mr. Patrice Tardif, a member of the legislative council, to the Senate.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): From Saint-Méthode-de-Frontenac.

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Tardif, who represented the riding of Frontenac at the time in the National Assembly, or as it was known, the legislative assembly, had a rather unusual way of talking in that he pronounced the letter s like a z. One day, several months after his appointment, he encountered Premier Duplessis in the halls of the Quebec parliament.

Mr. Tardif asked the Premier what the people were saying about his appointment. The Premier answered in French "Ils ne disent rien, Patrice, ils zisent."

This answer speaks volume about the way Quebecers felt at the time about the Upper House. I think we can safely say that in 1994, their opinion has not changed.