

Supply

Among those instances of admirable reticence, judgment and calm deliberation which he claims characterizes the work of the Senate, would he number the instance in 1988—I believe it is in the order of 20 instances in the history of the country when the Senate has defeated a House of Commons bill—when his own retired leader directed the Liberal majority in the Senate to hold up the free trade agreement, let it go nowhere and make it the subject of an election as an example of the polite and retiring reticence he thinks characterizes the Senate's work? Or would he number the current activities of the Senate with regard to the unemployment insurance legislation in which they have rejected outright certain aspects of the government bill that has passed the House of Commons as an example?

Mr. Kaplan: Madam Speaker, I am not going to fall into the trap of saying I agree with every single thing that the Senate has ever done, and that it always acted in a way which he and I would have agreed appropriate in a particular case.

Mr. Harvey: Are you repudiating what you said?

Mr. Kaplan: No, no. I do want to tell the hon. member that the story is not over on a lot of these very important matters that are before the Senate.

The Senate has heavy handed tools to use to achieve the subtle goals and objectives that I suggested. I think one of the Es to which we will want to move—

[*Translation*]

—would be to find ways whereby the Senate could more moderately, if not make specific changes in the legislation, at least clearly show the people that the opposite is unacceptable and on every issue ensure that Confederation represents the interests not only of those in large numbers but of minorities and takes account of their demands.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the point that the hon. member for Edmonton East was making. He referred to 1988 when the Senate refused to abide by the government timetable on the free trade agreement, thereby letting the people decide how they felt about the free trade agreement and

how each party behaved during the campaign when they did not make the free trade agreement a centrepiece of their election campaign, as the Liberal party did.

The hon. member said that this motion is a cheap political shot by the NDP. I would like to know his thoughts about how the New Democratic Party behaved during the last campaign when it had an opportunity to defeat this government. The free trade agreement, this legislation, the GST, UIC, VIA Rail and all these things we are now dealing with, and which it purports to be so much against, would not be with us at all if it had fought on the side of the Canadian people in 1988. It would have saved us a lot of heartache since then.

• (1640)

Mr. Kaplan: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend has made a very good point. It is not required for us to even make the allegations. The history is out now and enough stories have been told by insiders about the NDP strategy to make it clear that there was a critical moment when it had the opportunity to save our country from the free trade agreement and it chose another course. It puts in doubt, if one wants to challenge credibility, their own credibility about where they stand on the free trade agreement.

Mr. Kristiansen: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order. I am just wondering if we could have agreement among the members in the House and the parties, that future speakers might divide their time 10 minutes and 10 minutes, with five and five when it comes to questions and comments, rather than each speaker having to take the entire 20 minutes. It may facilitate further, provided that they give notice of their intent to the Speaker prior to the commencement of their first speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Would there there be unanimous consent for that? The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Nicholson: Perhaps the way we could do it is if the members of the NDP would like to do that. I know a number of speakers on our side were prepared for 20-minute speeches. Perhaps we could agree for the members of the NDP and if the Liberals are interested in doing that. We will continue as we have been on this side of the House.