

That is what Quebecers are going to do to the Conservatives for the next 100 years. Do not think that we are going to be fooled like that for long.

Mr. Lapierre: This time they will vote for the Bloc!

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): I hope you understand full well what I mean. It is a disgrace to see things done that way, to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in order to keep Quebecers from expressing themselves.

• (1850)

I have another important point to make, Mr. Speaker. The Conservative government and the Liberals who support it—and I am not the only one to say that—just want to short-circuit the Quebec referendum. Quebecers took a serious step. They want to express themselves so the Conservative government tries to short-circuit the Quebec referendum. It wants to keep Quebecers from freely expressing themselves on their future, and that too is a disgrace. I hope that Quebecers understand—I am convinced they do—that members from the Bloc Quebecois are defending them today and are not going to be bullied.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us is deficient in several respects. It does not provide for umbrella committees; it does not limit the number of committees, so an unlimited number of committees is possible. In fact this means that there is no spending limit. So much so that the hon. member for Outremont asked earlier why have spending limits, while his government referring to its bill tries to have us believe that there is a limit of 56 cents per voter.

The government was not even able to get the member for Outremont to believe this, although he usually swallows whatever he is told. He told us, "There are no spending limits; we don't need any." He is right about that, I understand perfectly; it is for show—there is no spending limit.

Also the government is not subject to these tight limits. It does not have to disclose its spending or reveal its sources. In fact it clearly wants to buy votes. We will see. We have already seen. It has started an extraordinary propaganda campaign; we saw private broadcasters who will invest up to \$10 million in a campaign that will start again in September. They said so clearly in a letter to all members of this House in September, a few weeks before the Quebec referendum deadline.

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It is not by chance we are told. They will put out propaganda and we are told why. In that, they are following the example of the Liberal government in 1980. The federal government in 1980 did not comply with the Quebec law. It was not subject to the Quebec law so it inundated Quebec with propaganda leaflets. In a meeting with prisoners in Bordeaux jail I saw people who had received a pamphlet in prison touting the merits of Canada. It was headed, "I'm here to stay". They appreciated that a lot I can tell you.

I think that we are overlooking important democratic gains that Canada has made. I am thinking of the Election Act. It sets spending limits and other conditions. I do not understand why this government does not follow Quebec's example with umbrella committees and spending limits; it has worked well. Everyone has boasted about how democratic the Quebec referendum was. The member for Jonquière uses it as a model but not the government.

We are told that the charter would not allow limiting spending or the number of committees, but the charter is there to support freedom of expression. We may ask who are free to express themselves. Those who have money? That is the answer the government gives us. Basically they are confusing the purposes of the charter with some of its technical aspects. The purpose of a charter of rights and freedoms is to ensure a greater measure of justice, freedom, equality, fairness; everyone should have the same right to speak. This bill totally contradicts that principle.

Nevertheless this charter has a mechanism to allow spending limits or to limit the number of committees without violating it. The notwithstanding clause could be used. The clause is part of the charter. Now, either the clause is faulty and we get rid of it, or the charter is acceptable in its present form, and we use the mechanisms provided in the charter.

I am in favour of these amendments, and I imagine the hon. member for Jonquière will vote against the bill, unless it is amended. I imagine the hon. member for Chambly will do the same since they both said they could not accept the lack of spending limits and the anti-democratic tenor of this bill was unacceptable. I imagine that all the members—the hon. members for Richmond, Louis-Hébert, Rimouski—Témiscaouata, Bellechasse and Roberval, for instance—who took part in the 1980