

interests rather than sharing their responsibility with a reformed Senate.

If the Senate is simply abolished therefore there is very little likelihood a reformed Senate would ever be established. The Canadian federal system would fail to balance representation by population with representation by province, an essential characteristic for any federal system, particularly in a large country with an unevenly distributed population.

It is therefore the position of the Reform Party that the useless and offensive features of the current Senate should be and must be abolished and that an elected, equal and effective Senate created in its place.

•(1640)

In the short term, representatives of an elected body would be more responsive to the desires of the provinces of Canada and it would not require a constitutional fight to accomplish the changes we are suggesting.

In the longer term, Canadians should continue to demand an effective regional federal body to ensure that all Canadians are adequately represented in the Canadian Parliament. The long range interest of Canadian federalism, Senate reform, must be put ahead of the short term expediency of Senate abolition.

As has been mentioned by many members today, we talk a lot about drastic changes in the way this place and the entire federal system operate. Certainly we have been talking about fiscal responsibility, getting government spending under control and cutting government spending.

There are two ways to look at this. One is to cut federal spending; the other way is to prioritize federal spending. We want to take the approach of prioritizing federal spending and we talk about that in many areas and in many programs. Certainly the Senate must be one of them. We must prioritize our spending. If an elected, effective and equal Senate is a priority as we believe it is, then we must use those funds in our Senate and make cuts where there is excess in programs or non-productive programs.

I look forward to questions and comments from hon. members. I appreciate very much having had this opportunity to speak on this subject.

[Translation]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne):** Mr. Speaker, let us say that, for only a few minutes, I agree with my colleague and that I support the Senate. It is only for a few minutes, because I do not really agree with him, but it is a figure of speech. I would like to ask my colleague, since the Senate is so important, if he can say who is the senator representing his region.

### Supply

I would also like to ask him, in the case of an elected Senate such as the one proposed by his party, the triple-E Senate, which House would make the final decision on passing bills? Would it be the elected House of Commons or the elected Senate? Let us take, for example, a bill on the right to abortion.

My last question is: does he believe that having bills passed by only one House in his province is wrong or harmful?

[English]

**Mr. Kerpan:** Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's first question about who would make the final decision on a bill, it really is a very simple process, almost too simple to believe it could work. Many times in the past ordinary rank and file Canadians have had ideas that seem too simple to work, yet they do.

When talking about where the final responsibility would be for a bill, what would happen under a triple-E Senate would be as is the normal process in the House. We would vote on and pass a bill, send it to the other place and the Senate would then have the opportunity to either accept or defeat it and send it back.

The other part of the solution is that the defeat of a government motion or bill would not necessarily bring down the government. That is the safeguard in sending a bill back from Senate which was not passed in the Senate. The bill would come back to this House, we would deal with it again, make it better and make it acceptable to the Senate. The process would work very well.

As far as the second part of the member's question about one House by itself in a province, I assume he means Saskatchewan. Certainly on a provincial level it is an entirely different issue, or at least it is in my province which is thinly populated, with fewer than a million people. There is no need for an upper and lower house in that type of process. Certainly in a Canadian-wide process where there are 10 provinces, much diversity and many different areas, there is certainly a need for an effective Senate.

•(1645)

**Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with enthusiasm to the member opposite with regard to his presentation. However, I find that having been here the same length of time that he has we must be attending different meetings of this House.

As I remember we have had some free votes. I think the member opposite was likely here when we voted on Bosnia. We have had other discussions that are going to lend to free votes. Yet there seems to be the impression that the 35th Parliament is not going to provide that mechanism.

I would like to know from the member opposite if he was in attendance. Has he seen that happen? Is he aware of the fact that