

Supply

ties. Furthermore, he is a former chairman of the Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française and he played many other roles.

The hon. member opposite may not have been here for long, but he should take a little look at the background of our French-speaking parliamentarians from outside Quebec. The late Senator Bélisle was Mayor of Sudbury and a minister in the Ontario Legislature before being called to the Senate. Did the hon. member forget the history of Senator Bélisle, one of the two francophones outside Quebec to have been in municipal, provincial and federal government? The other one is me.

An hon. member: At the same time?

Mr. Boudria: No. Not at the same time.

Third, he said that the senators were almost all appointed to their position as a political reward. Does he forget the work done by Senator Beaudoin, a constitutional expert who was not appointed to represent my party or his own? Senator Beaudoin speaks in defence of francophone minorities.

Surely the hon. member opposite should apologize to those three parliamentarians I just mentioned.

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will certainly not succeed in making me cry.

In response to a comment that the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell made earlier, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra told him that provincial representation in the Senate simply does not exist. So, you can just forget about regional representation.

Second, I will tell my colleague that his party is in a catch-22 situation. The Liberals are defending the allocation of funds to a Senate which, according to the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, must be reformed and improved. My colleague does not realize that, to do so, we have to amend the Constitution, and it so happens that his own leader has said clearly that amendments to the Constitution were absolutely out of the question. Do these people talk to each other sometimes? It seems that they do not talk to each other at all.

Does the hon. member not hear what his leader says here in the House? Each time he is asked a question about constitutional matters, the Prime Minister says that he does not want to talk about the Constitution. Yet, the argument invoked by the hon. member to defend the allocation of funds to the Senate is that we must improve the Senate, change the name of the game, and so on. Such comments cannot be serious.

We know full well that the Senate has no power. Senators are appointed by the Prime Minister and they have a particular job to do, a job that is partisan in nature. Everybody knows that. The Senate costs a fortune to administer, more than \$42 million to be exact, and yet, as mentioned by the Auditor General in his last report, it sits only a little over 40 days a year, with absenteeism running at between 20 and 25 per cent. It is ridiculous to invest

millions of dollars in such a useless institution when there are so many unemployed and so many people on welfare in Quebec and across Canada.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe.

He has pointed out the constitutional contradictions in our era of transition. He has quoted two models, but they are completely divergent. The American model is not a House of sober second thought, like the one in Westminster. He admitted that. It operates equally as a House of sober second thought and as a body working as a constitutional check and balance vis-à-vis the executive power. In comparison, the German Bundesrat is certainly not a House of sober second thought. It is essentially an intergovernmental committee of high-ranking officials.

• (1630)

Is he then advocating one or the other as a model, for example, for a revision of the Canadian constitution?

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): I thank the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra for his question. We have frequent discussions in committee. I know that he is very learned and that he has great concern for democracy and parliamentary institutions.

The hon. member noticed that I made reference to two different systems in my remarks. I meant to compare our Canadian Senate, which is completely ineffective, with two different models that do work, each in its own way. They get things done, they wield some power, and play specific roles. My colleague had mentioned a few models, and I just added a few more.

Our fundamental goal is always to increase the powers and the role of members in this House so that they can really begin to carry out their duties as soon as they are elected and do so completely.

I do not advocate any model for the Senate. What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is examining an ineffective institution, and pointing out that this government does not want to change the rules because it refuses to reopen the Constitution. It does not want to hear a single word about the Constitution, even though some of its members would like to bring about improvements and propose amendments.

I do not advocate any specific model. All I said is that the Senate just does not work, and that it does not need that much money.

[English]

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in response to the Bloc motion. I am happy to stand before the House and say that I and the Reform Party certainly oppose the Bloc motion. We believe the intent of this motion obviously is to eliminate spending on the Senate and thereby achieve the de facto abolishment of it. The