

Supply

ers support this idea, it is obvious that—since we are paying 24 per cent of taxes—we must protect the interests of Quebec.

Today, we are not requesting the Senate's abolition. We only oppose the funds allocated to it. We feel that, in these very tough economic times, these funds should be reduced. I am very surprised that Reform Party members do not agree with a measure aimed at reducing expenditures in Canada.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I think it is necessary to ask a supplementary question to follow up on the one just asked by my colleague from the Reform Party.

The member opposite says that he is not amending the Constitution when eliminating a vote in the Main Estimates. At least, I think that this is what he is saying. He is not abolishing the Senate, because an amendment to the Constitution would be required to do so, and I do not personally, and neither do my constituents, feel in the mood to amend the Constitution at this time.

However, this seems more or less what the member wants to do. Does he think, since the two chambers, the Senate and the House of Commons, are under the authority of the Constitution, that the House of Commons has the right to abolish almost all the Senate votes? Does he also think that the Senate has the right to abolish all the House of Commons votes, including his own?

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, the member usually asks questions that are, I will not say devious, but certainly clever from his point of view.

Let me repeat: no, the purpose of the motion is not to abolish the Senate. It concerns budget votes. I think we have the right to say, to estimate, to declare that the amounts voted for the Senate are too high. That is why we are expressing such an opinion.

A member of Parliament should, among other things, reflect the opinion of his constituents. I mentioned certain opinions, more particularly those of young Quebecers. Members from Quebec are here to say to the other side of the House: "Here is what Quebec thinks, here is what Quebecers think of this situation". That is the long and the short of it.

• (1825)

I think my time is up, but I feel any member should share my concern, he should find ways to attract young people to politics. I think we should propose alternatives to young people so that they get interested in the public life. Therefore, any member should be open to discussion on changes, even if these changes affect something that he considers to be very important today.

Mr. Gaston Pélouquin (Brome—Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to defend the interests

of Canadian and Quebec taxpayers, by demanding that votes for the Senate's expenditures be cancelled.

I believe that this whole debate on the Senate is highlighting two aspects of Canadian federalism; it proves that it is not only inefficient, but also unable to renew itself to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As we all remember, on February 22 last, the Liberal government tabled its budget.

We must remember that this budget made significant cuts affecting the unemployed and senior citizens. Moreover, it increased the tax base for the middle class. Therefore, this budget hit the unemployed, senior citizens and the middle class.

When reviewing allocations in this same budget, one notices that close to \$27 million are ear-marked for Senate expenditures. No cuts there. This very brief analysis of the latest budget tells a lot about the Liberal government's real priorities, and even more about the operation of this bankrupt Canadian federation.

We do not want to play party politics, because we know full well that the previous government would have done just the same, and that the next one will do likewise. As we just saw, it is now simpler for the government of this country, regardless of the party in office, to hit the poor, those who are already reeling from the recession, than to ask its very rich friends, the senators, to do their share.

A country where it is easier to let the deficit grow, signing away future generations' life, where the only cuts are made on the backs of the needy, where government patronage appointees do not reduce their extravagant lifestyles while the public is stuck in a very hard recession, is a very sick country. It could even be terminally ill.

All in all, when we add indirect spending inherent in its operation, this Senate packed with the government's non-elected and non-representative friends, spends more than \$54 million dollars over some forty sitting days a year, about twelve hours a month. Moreover, the absentee rate of some senators is around 66 per cent. All this is highly significant.

Those nasty Quebec separatists are not the only ones asking that this House made up of non-elected members be eliminated. Somebody called Claude Ryan—maybe some of my colleagues have heard about him—proposed in 1980, in his beige paper, the elimination of the Upper House. That is why during the 1980 referendum debate in Quebec, federalists were proposing the total elimination of the Senate.

A few months shy of another important referendum, what do federalists suggest to Quebecers? The status quo. In other words, they want taxpayers to go on paying more than a million dollars a day to keep a House that represents no one.