

reading debates frequently continued to be lengthy and after a couple of days of debate, it was noted, tended to be repetitious. In 1982 it was decided that after eight hours of second reading debate, that is after about two sitting days, further speeches would be reduced to 10 minutes. That is the present system.

That was an experiment that appeared to be working, but one which the present government has been generally unwilling to facilitate. Almost no second reading debate has been permitted by this government to pass the eight-hour threshold before this government has invoked some form of closure.

Now the government proposes to reduce the eight-hour period to five hours, about one sitting day. It also proposes to apply this rule not only to second reading, but to the third reading as well.

• (1700)

In addition, the government is removing the provision for a 40 minute speech length for the first spokesperson for the third party and it is eliminating the heretofore unlimited speech length for the first two speakers at third reading.

We do not have to say it in a loud voice. We can say through you, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Canada, that this is a very well thought out package of rule changes. It does the following.

Members of Parliament draw a salary of some \$64,000, a \$20,000 in tax free allowance, as well as other perks for telephones, postage, office and staff. I think it would be safe to say that we would average roughly \$100,000 a year in income or thereabouts. We are now being told by the government opposite that we will be paid that sum of money not to be in Ottawa for 235 days. When we are here, the government does not want us to talk too often. It does not want us to participate in the budgetary debate of the Minister of Finance. It does not want us to participate in the Speech from the Throne.

Opposition days will be reduced by 20 per cent. Individual statutes, some of which you have expressed great concern and interest over the many years that you have served in this Chamber, members of parliament will

be cut off on second reading and will be cut off on third reading.

If the general public does not understand what is taking place, I want to say that this is taking place 18 months before the next federal election. Do you see what is happening? This is an attempt by a government that is so low in the polls to put together a package which would enable them in some way to allow their colleagues, their members, to go to their constituencies in the hope that they might be able to soothe the anger, the frustration, the disappointment, the contempt that the general public has for them, their leader and their party.

**An hon. member:** They are wasting their time.

**Mr. Dingwall:** As my colleague from Newfoundland, a distinguished House leader in that assembly, said just a moment ago: "They will never do it. It is not going to work". It is just not going to work. Canadians must realize that this is a contrived document. I suggest it came from the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's Office and, of course, the government House leader and his very able—and I want to underline this—parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, very able, but misguided in every way.

There is little justification for any of these proposals. The elimination of the 40 minute provision for the third party's principal spokesperson is, in my view, and I say to my colleague of the New Democratic Party, peevish and it is petty and a removal of the unlimited time for the principal speakers from the government and opposition at third reading is unnecessary and probably in the long term will prove to be counter productive.

It is at the third reading stage that the House finally has before it the bill in the form in which it is to be passed. This is the only opportunity on which either the government or the opposition has to comment fully on the bill and all of the issues and circumstances pertaining to it. The unlimited time provisions are virtually never abused. In fact, it is a short-sighted government that proposes to do away with it. I do not think it is necessary to give that up. All that will happen is that more speakers will want to speak longer. Rather than improve the quality of the debate, this proposal will unfocus it.