

Routine Proceedings

They just as honestly and fervently held their view which represented the perspective of their constituents.

The point is that once television hit this House the power flowed out to the committees where people could debate the issues, make compromises and send them back to this House.

Another point I would like to make is that in the United Kingdom, in France, in many other parliaments and in the United States, the vast majority of the full legislative jurisdiction is in one parliament. The legislation that is considered in Britain and in France is the equivalent of all of the legislation that we consider in this House plus everything that is done in the provincial legislatures.

That means they have had to come up with routines that make the House far more efficient. In Britain, a major bill, whether it be like the National Energy Program that we had in the last Parliament, or free trade or the Meech Lake Accord as we had in this Parliament, would be allocated four speeches, perhaps two hours in all. They then go to a legislative committee where it is looked into by a committee, and comes back.

The point is that during that major debate opinions can change because people know that it is a significant speech. Madam Speaker, as you well appreciate, in this House, and it does not matter who is in the government and who is in opposition, the fact of the matter is that when you are in opposition, and we were exactly the same when we were in opposition, you try to use up as much time as you can.

Yet beyond the first speech it is all repetition. That is why this House has lost its meaningfulness. The vast bulk of the speakers just repeat what the first speaker said on behalf of the party, whether it is the government party or the two opposition parties. It is an enormous waste of time here and it does not change anyone's mind.

• (1250)

I speak from the perspective of someone who has been here for some 11 years. I have sat as a back-bencher in the opposition. I have sat as a critic of a specific department in the opposition. I have been a back-bencher on the government side. I have chaired standing and special committees. I have been a parliamentary secretary and all that involves at the committee level. The fact

of the matter is that the most satisfying part of being a parliamentarian is committee work.

What might have been an imperative driving the members on the committee was to be able to give members of Parliament more visibility back in our ridings, for those many, many hours we all spend at the committee level where we really make a substantial contribution to the public life of Canada. There is no doubt about that. I fervently believe that.

I know of all sorts of occasions when committee members of all three parties have made substantial changes to bills. On the standing committees they have input policy that has then showed up later on in a statute that comes out. The problem is that we get no credit for it. But why should we expect credit for it? We are elected. We have a term as long as the Parliament exists. We have an obligation. We are very well paid at \$80,000 a year, \$20,000 of which is tax free. We do have an obligation to come and work hard, and the vast bulk of members do.

If I could have my choice, I would rather be an independent. Independents do not have any responsibility. They never have to go to committees. They do not ever have to compromise their views. They can sit there in all their pristine virginity and never compromise. But they have absolutely no power. They never change one thing in this House. If you want to be here, get very well paid and not do anything, then you want to cross the floor and sit as an independent. It is a marvellous life of freedom with no responsibility. The fact of the matter is that government members and opposition members do have a responsibility. I think that it is at the committee stage.

I remember being the Parliamentary Secretary on the legislative committee which studied all the deregulation bills on transportation. It studied the National Transportation Act, the coasting trade and other statutes. As a Parliamentary Secretary I could see the logic of dozens of amendments that came from government members and from both parties in the opposition. As I recollect we accepted some 118 amendments.

When I became convinced that it was a good amendment, as the Parliamentary Secretary I would go to the minister, who happened to be the present Minister for International Trade, and say, "Look, minister, if we can get these amendments I think I can negotiate a package with the opposition to be able to get the bill through in a