

Government Orders

• (1305)

He indicated that the House would lose the right to hold a debate on the principle of a bill at second reading, that is true. But, at the same time, the committee to which the bill is referred will have a lot of opportunities to review the bill.

As a member of the Bloc Québécois, he did not have the opportunity to do committee work in the last Parliament. If he had been a member of a committee, he would have realized that many proposed amendments are inadmissible as the principle of the bill has already been voted on by the House itself.

The committee members cannot change this principle. What is this principle? This argument is always debated by the committees, and an amendment which proposes a major change to a bill is deemed to have altered the principle of the bill; thus, the amendment becomes inadmissible. It is a problem.

The new procedure will eliminate this problem and the hon. members will have to opportunity to put forward many amendments that were previously inadmissible. So I hope that when he sees this new procedure put into practice, he will support our proposal. This procedure will eliminate, with other opportunities, the second reading debate in the House. I hope that he will see our proposal in this light because I think it helps to understand our meaning. I hope that this explanation will help him.

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I am not judging the government's intentions. My judgment was based on what will happen in practice.

First of all, in committee, there are no more than two or three members from opposition parties, which limits considerably their ability to speak. Second, a debate in committee is not as public and general as a debate in this House, where all Canadians can find out, through newspapers and television, what the members said about a particular issue.

With regard to votes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, I will tell you that a member's work in his riding is not only on weekends. Very often, we have to go back to our ridings during the week. Moreover, in the past, votes were held mostly on Mondays and very rarely on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. If we are to vote on a particular day, why not choose a day when more members are present. This would allow us to strike a better balance between our work in our ridings and our work here in Ottawa.

We were told in the past that it was impossible to defer a vote for more than 48 hours. That is what has always been done. I think there is a very simple solution: to defer votes for 72 hours. It is just 24 hours more and that is exactly what was done when the Prime Minister was scheduled to give a speech in Toronto last Monday. The government thought that 72 hours instead of

48 made a lot of sense. It allowed the Prime Minister to be here for the vote. I think that what was done for the Prime Minister could very well be done for other members of the House.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find a disposition on this side of the House to limit speeches to 10 minutes with the usual 5-minute questions and comments thereafter.

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, as I rise on this occasion to make my maiden speech, I wish to extend my congratulations and best wishes as you face your new and most difficult task.

There is no greater honour for me than standing before this House as the newly elected member for Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe. The riding, as the name suggests, is made up of municipalities of four counties in southwestern Ontario. In total there are 31 towns, townships and villages with four upper tier county councils.

The riding's boundaries are the historic and picturesque town of Elora, Nichol township to the south, the rural and agricultural communities of Clifford and Minto township to the west. The largest and most urban area is the town of Orangeville to the east and the beautiful port communities of Collingwood and Thornbury on Georgian Bay to the north. This vast and diverse riding is representative of the uniqueness and diversity of its citizens residing within its borders. Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe is home to 112,000 people, and I wish to extend my sincere thanks for the trust and opportunity they have provided in allowing me to represent them.

I would also be remiss if I did not take this time and opportunity to thank my wife and family for their dedication and support and understanding as I embark on my new parliamentary career.

The topic of debate today in the House is parliamentary reform. It is probably safe to assume the reason two-thirds of us are here and new to the House is that many defeated incumbents paid little heed to the demands from the public about this very important issue.

If the House would allow me some licence to address the concerns voiced to me during the election campaign, I will proceed. One of the most visible and contentious areas which requires change is the pensions for members of Parliament. During the election there was a clear message that we must return to an understanding we are the representatives of the people and as true representatives we must understand and appreciate the values of those we represent, values of equity, fairness and service.