

retirement program for lawyers, has lately become a bitterly divisive issue. Western Canadians and Atlantic Canadians are increasingly demanding a reform of the other place. Certainly, British Columbia organizations are looking to California, seeing what is going on there, and demanding that the public initiate referenda.

I ask myself why this is happening? Why are so many demands to change the basic structures of our nation surfacing at the same time? The answer is simple. The public senses that the parliamentary system in Canada is breaking down and out of frustration are demanding action in their own ways and with their own ideas.

This is not a partisan issue. It does not surprise me that the system is breaking down. The British parliamentary system has been a battleground to fight the tyranny of autocratic governments since King John convened the very first one in 1213. Not a century has gone by without a major constitutional restructuring. In fact, the first signs of parliamentary authority were found only when Parliament took up arms against King Charles I and literally removed the head of government.

We are fond of saying that ours is the oldest parliamentary system on the planet.

We are fond of referring to the mother Parliament in London and to the millennium of history that gave rise to constitutional monarchy, and we are fond of showing that even the United States has based its system on the British system.

This is a re-write of history.

It was only under King William and Queen Mary that Parliament began to win supremacy over the government and only under Queen Anne that the Royal veto was eliminated. In short, it was only in the 18th century that the British parliamentary system began to emerge.

It is worth considering why the British parliamentary system emerged. Parliament had won supremacy over legislation and taxation through a bloody civil war. That civil war had resulted in the Hanoverians replacing the Stuarts on the throne. King George I required legislation and taxation in order to run the government. His claim on the throne was being questioned by the people and King George I was faced with a situation that might have made him more unpopular than our Prime Minister is today.

With hindsight, King George appears to have been the first modern politician. It was he who set the precedent of appointing ministers from the House of Commons.

### *Government Orders*

He realized that, by putting the most influential members of the House of Commons on the government payroll, he could have them fight for his legislation and moneys on the floor of the Chamber. Furthermore, the public would see these popular figures supporting the new monarch and thereby give him legitimacy.

A cynic would claim that the entire British parliamentary system is based on conflict of interests and would probably claim that today's rule changes are also part of this conflict of interest.

The government House leader states that these rule changes are necessary for members of Parliament to fulfil their duties. Some of these members are bored. They sit there day after day, having little or no say in debate.

I have heard journalists speculate that these rule changes are necessary to deal with the independents in the House, that the Conservative government is hoping for a minority in the next Parliament and wants to change the rules to ensure that legislation will pass through a multi-party legislature. I do not agree. I take the government at its word.

I am sure the primary motivation for the government is concern for the way Conservative members are occupying their time. The opposition benches are now riddled with members who occupy their time by participating in debate on the government's legislation.

By definition, the government does not want members to participate in debate. Let's face it, in the current parliamentary system, Conservative members do not want to participate in debate. If they speak against the government they will have to criticize the Prime Minister. If they oppose him they will be opposing the man who must sign their nomination papers, who will appear on their election literature, and who 80 per cent of the voters will think of when they see the ballot. Thanks to King George I, most of these MPs are in a conflict of interest situation.

The government's solution, which we are debating today, is to lessen the number of hours that Parliament sits. This is to permit, in the government's words, backbench members to have more time to be in their constituencies.

I am a member who recognizes the importance of being in the constituency and I spend virtually every weekend and every break we have in my constituency. The sole reason for this is to obtain advice and input from my constituents on important matters facing Parlia-