

*Supply*

that members of Parliament do not have anything substantial to offer. I want to say something in defence of all of us, even though I have listened to a lot of crappy speeches. I have also listened to many good ones which went completely and totally unreported because it was past the deadline, too complicated, or no one could be bothered to listen to them. This is something I wanted to put on the record. There is a thing called "the media" which also has responsibilities in this business. They are the interlocutors or the people who stand between us and our constituents, between us and the country; they are the filter. I happen to think that from time to time they do not do a particularly good job. If that means that I will not get any press coverage from now until doomsday, so be it.

Another matter the hon. member for Saskatoon East (Mr. Ogle) wanted me to mention is something which I do not think has received enough attention tonight. I am referring to the entire question of voting, the incredible amount of time which is taken up voting in this place, and the need for reform of the amount of time required for us to vote. In many different parliamentary and legislative assemblies around the world, there are methods of voting such as electronic voting and voting with cards. Various mechanisms are available which would make possible a much more efficient method of voting. The one thing I like about the way in which we vote is the symbol of people having to rise to say where they stand on a particular issue. I would be distressed to see that sort of human side of voting taken away by any reform, but perhaps it is something we must consider.

Also I should like to see reform of the way in which we perceive the act of abstaining on a vote in Canadian politics. In many other institutions at least people have three options—they can vote yes, they can vote no, or they can abstain and say why they abstain. There is a third position; politicians are not always caught in this either/or situation of having to vote yes or no. It obscures the quality of decision-making and it obscures the ability of Members of Parliament to say where they are on any particular issue. Everything comes down to the vote—one is either for it or against it. This is a very uncomplicated and, in some cases, primitive way of looking at issues. We ought to have more options available to us. I should like to see some reform in this area.

That is about all I wanted to say. I hope this will be the first step toward meaningful parliamentary reform. I get little attacks of despair when I hear members who have been here for ten, 15 or 18 years rising and saying, "We have been talking about parliamentary reform since way back when". I do not know if I want to wait around another 16 years before we actually get around to doing something. There has already been much talk about parliamentary reform, and it is about time there was some kind of consensus.

I was particularly interested in hearing the remarks of the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) because he chaired a special task force on fiscal arrangements of which I was a member. We managed to come to some kind of consensus about a very difficult matter, although sometimes the hon. member interprets the consensus differently from me. One of

my ideas is that perhaps we should have a special parliamentary task force. Task forces have served us well in the past. Perhaps we should set up a small committee to travel across the country to obtain the views of people on parliamentary reform and to come up with a consensus. If the debate this afternoon and this evening has been sincere, it would be something to which all parties could listen and respect, and perhaps by next fall we might have some parliamentary reforms on the books which would make this place a better place in which to work, a better place for Canadians.

**Mr. Jack Burghardt (London West):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak during this debate. While I have been on my feet at numerous times during question period and during the 15-minute period when we are allowed to make motions on anything from the sublime to the ridiculous, I have not had the opportunity to speak at length during debate in the House, due in part to the parliamentary system under which we operate. I know that I can perhaps speak tonight on almost anything, but I will stick to the matter at hand because I feel the subject is of utmost importance to the operation of this great House of Commons.

I welcome the opportunity to speak as the Member of Parliament for the riding of London West, a riding which I believe is the third largest in Canada in terms of population, on this subject of parliamentary reform. Since coming into the House last April following my election, I have had the opportunity of seeing first hand how the parliamentary system works, or does not work. I am afraid to say that quite often the latter is more the case. In coming from a background of broadcast news media which tends to report only the so-called highlights of the action of Parliament, I must confess that it is not until one comes into the parliamentary process in a very personal way that one's eyes are opened to the inaction of much of the parliamentary procedure. Unfortunately, the public, as my hon. friend mentioned just a moment ago, is left with only a sham battle to watch on the television screen and to sit back and watch amazed at the circus antics of question period.

I know that the entire subject of parliamentary reform is a contentious one. I believe it was Mark Twain who said, "Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits." If this be true, it is no wonder that other attempts at reform have been clouded with doubt and suspicion. For the government side to talk about parliamentary reform is to be viewed by the opposition as some other device to try to slip some piece of legislation quickly through the House. For the opposition to talk about reform is to be viewed by the government as another device to come up with more tactics of delay and of obstruction. Cautious, careful people, always looking about to preserve their reputation and political standing, will not bring about reform. Those who are really honest in wanting reform must be willing to do anything or nothing in the estimation of the citizens of the country.

James Bryce back in 1888 said: