

are an additional five hours of debate, that will mean 36 members will be allowed to debate this bill on second reading. Many more will be allowed to participate at other stages, and the committee debate is often unlimited. Hon. members seem to think that every member of parliament ought to exercise his right as a member and speak on every bill in which he has an interest.

Mr. Paproski: If he wants to.

Mr. Cafik: If this were done, because we have 264 members of parliament it would take four to five weeks to go through the first stages in this House, and even longer at the report stage because if a number of amendments were filed there would be no limit. This would mean that one bill could take four or five months of the time of the House of Commons. There are only 12 months in a year, and everybody is constantly clamouring for changes and adjustments in legislation. We cannot have it both ways. As members of parliament some of us have to be responsible and sometimes limit our whims and our desire to put our remarks on the record in the interest of the common good of society.

Surely, the public is not expecting too much when it expects parties to organize themselves in such a way that the divergent views within them are properly and adequately expressed at all stages so they can be considered by the government and all hon. members, but I do not think anyone—as subjective or objective as he might be—who sits in our galleries day after day and listens to the debates which take place in this chamber would really come out of here thinking he is well served by the rhetoric to which we are forced to listen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: A good example of this is found in committees where everyone presses for meetings on estimates. We wait 20 minutes before we can even open these meetings because the members who wanted the meetings do not show up. These members are to be found in all parties; I am not being partisan on this point. When we have a department before us in a committee we find four or five members representing four parties in this House there to discuss these all-important estimates. Then they come back here and complain that they did not have an opportunity to express themselves. It seems to me that we have to be in the House and we have to be in these committees before we have a right to complain about not being heard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: Let us look at this question in terms of other legislatures. In the “mother of parliaments”, the British parliament, debates in most stages do not exceed one day’s duration. About a year and a half ago, or perhaps before that, I was listening to the CBC one morning and I was surprised to learn that it was anticipated that one of the longest debates in British history was about to take place on the question of whether Britain should enter the European Economic Community. That was a very substantive question, and it was expected

that the debate would last about four days, one of the longest debates in British history.

We spend that much time deciding whether we should even debate at all, never mind the debate! The way we orchestrate business in this House is absolutely absurd. To some extent it is the fault of hon. members on this side because we do not have the courage to limit debates as often as they ought to be limited. I am critical of the government for that. However, the British system works differently for a very substantial reason, and that is that in Britain there are two major parties, both of whom have a reasonable expectation of getting into office and forming the government. Therefore, they are prepared to allow governments to function as governments because they think they will get a turn at it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Neither of those parties is Liberal.

Mr. Cafik: That is right. But in this country the Conservatives have been in office so seldom that they never seem to act as if they will ever get there, and they are preoccupied with trying to ensure that governments cannot govern. Judging by their actions, I suggest they will never form a government. They will not form a government until they begin to exercise some degree of self-control and responsibility as an opposition and allow the government to put forward its legislative proposals. They should speak freely, openly and often, but not in a repetitious way. They should deal substantively with these questions. When these things happen, everybody will want to hear them and give them an opportunity to be heard, but the debate we hear after the first couple of speeches is just repetition. Therefore, I think this motion to limit the debate is a reasonable step for the government to take. With all due respect, I suggest that if hon. members opposite were on this side at this moment, they would do precisely the same thing and they would not be honest with themselves or with this country if they did not publicly admit that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member because the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) has perhaps put his finger on one of the difficulties which face us all as parliamentarians. He can make the accusation that it is the fault of our system that one party has been in opposition for a long period of time and therefore does not understand the difficulties which face the government. He can certainly do that, but I think the other side of the coin is also true. We in this House have not been blessed by the tenure in office over a long period of time of one party and I think this has adversely affected our parliamentary system in terms of the other party understanding the demands which are on the opposition. In a country as broad as ours, it is the duty of the opposition to show the other side of the coin, and that is what we have tried to do.

In the course of four days of debate of which two were short days, only 10 per cent of the members of this House have spoken on an issue which could affect the structure of our