

## Standing Orders

in Canada. To repeat a famous phrase, I think that is a "terminological inexactitude". I checked in the very volume to which the hon. member referred, May's Parliamentary Practice, fifteenth edition, to ascertain the length of British parliamentary sessions. I find that they had sessions of seven and one-half months before the war and eight and one-half months after the war, which rather exceeds the length of the sessions of this house.

The hon. member also referred to filibusters here, and suggested they had none in Britain. The all-night sessions they have had recently, however, would seem to come pretty close to filibusters. He also mentioned the debate on defence which took place there on March 5, describing it as lively and constructive, indicating the number of members who took part and the average length of their speeches. I would point out to hon. members that in that debate there was a better division as between the government and the opposition than is usually the case here. Eight members on the government side participated, with ten from the opposition benches. I think that indicates a greater element of freedom on the part of private members in the British house. I suggest it would be useful if we had the same degree of participation here by private members on the other side. Much as I enjoy listening to the ministers, there are many private members on the other side who have information which should be conveyed to this house.

The hon. member also indicated that in the British house the type of debate, attendance in the chamber and so on were much better, and he seemed to attribute that to certain rules they have which are not applicable here. I cannot see that there is a great deal of difference. There are occasions when the British house is crowded, when the atmosphere is tense and a great debate is in progress. There are also occasions in this house when there is a great air of expectancy, when the chamber is crowded and debate is lively and constructive. There are plenty of occasions in the British house when it is just as dull as it is in this house. I have sat in the galleries over there and have seen very scattered attendance. As far as I can see the only advantage they have over us is that the Prime Minister and those sitting in the front benches can put their feet on the table by the dispatch box, as I have seen Mr. Attlee do. I have listened to debates there that were no livelier than many debates here. After all, they go through the same routine. There are lively debates, and there are debates dealing with routine matters which do not attract much attention.

I suggest that Mr. A. P. Herbert's book "Independent Member" gives an idea of what transpires there; and it indicates that the situation is not very different from that in Canada. As hon. members will recall, Mr. Herbert was a member of the House of Commons for about sixteen years, during which time he was very active and influential. I am going to read one or two short passages from his book to indicate that things are not so different in the British house. If anyone imagines that everyone there pays rapt attention when a member is making a speech, let him listen to what Mr. Herbert says:

There is movement everywhere. It is like making a speech in a beehive and those who remain motionless are not necessarily attentive, or even silent. Ministers and whips must confer upon the course of the debate, check facts and figures, read documents about something quite different. A member will come in with a resolution or amendment to another bill, to which he is seeking signatures. He goes from friend to friend, and there is a whispered colloquy with each . . . Then there will be a few couples having private conversations about their holiday plans, about the party meeting, about the latest scandal, or the by-election, or the pretty girl in the Speaker's gallery.

As to the reading of speeches, I agree with what was said by the hon. member who preceded me. There are occasions when it is helpful to a person to be able to at least refer to his notes. As Erskine May puts it in his book on parliamentary procedure:

A member is not permitted to read his speech, but may refresh his memory by a reference to notes.

Then he goes on to say:

The chair does not as a rule intervene unless appealed to, and, unless there is good ground for interfering in the interests of debate, usually passes off the matter with a remark to the effect that the notes used by the hon. member appear to be unusually full, or that the hon. member has provided himself with rather copious notes.

I think perhaps that is the best approach to that question. Now and then members of the British house read their speeches, and dealing with the preparation and reading of speeches Mr. Herbert has this to say:

Mr. Churchill, they say, dictates the first versions of his great speeches; but what a time even that must take! Some humbler folk, like myself, are incapable of dictation: that is, being writers first and speakers afterwards, perhaps, we more surely find the satisfying phrase and sequence in the act of writing.

At first, I used to write out every word of a speech and have it typed—not for reading but for remembrance. To get good phrasing and a lucid line—unless you are a Churchill or a King's Counsel—I still think this is best, though now I much resent the expense of time and trouble. After that, if I may advise the beginner, it is a good thing to write the heads of the argument, with any choice quotations or figures, on the back page, or a blank page, of the bill, white paper, or what-not. It is natural and proper to see a member flourishing the bill which is under discussion: and—who knows?—he may have jotted down those brilliant arguments during the debate. I find myself often repelled by the other method—by the member who has an