

*Private Members' Resolutions*

(2) The following provisions shall have effect as respects public bills:

(a) no bills other than government bills shall be introduced;

The parliament in Great Britain found it necessary to adopt that course in a post-war period because of the growing importance of public measures as distinguished from private members' resolutions and bills. I am told that it has been found necessary to follow the same course this year. An appeal has been made to, and accepted by the house that, the importance of public measures being so great, they should be considered to the exclusion of other matters.

This house has set up a committee for the revision of the rules. It is perhaps not for me to suggest how the rules should be revised, and hon. members may take strong exception to what I am going to suggest, but I should hope that the question might be considered whether some arrangement could not be made either to bring on private members' resolutions near the end of the session rather than at the beginning, or to fix a limit of time to be devoted to any single resolution. I should think that private members might introduce their respective resolutions, have one or two speeches made upon them, and then allow the house to proceed with the consideration of other motions. To take up three or four days in discussing a private member's resolution does seem to me to be a waste of time when time is very precious in view of the urgency of public matters.

I throw out that thought at the moment because it is something in which we are all interested. I do not wish to take away any rights from private members, but I think that the nature of public business in parliament to-day is such that if the government has important measures that should be proceeded with expeditiously, and is prepared to proceed with those measures, some way ought to be found of giving public business priority.

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Peel): If I may suggest it to the Prime Minister, in the British house the private member has an opportunity, limited no doubt, but an opportunity nevertheless, during the first hour of each session, from 2.15 to 3.15 p.m. of seeking information orally from the government across the floor of the house. I realize that it begins with written questions, but the supplementary debate that takes place afterwards gives the private member a wide opportunity to discuss a variety of issues which normally are present in the private member's mind, and in regard to which he can seek information from the government.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

I intend at another stage of the proceedings to make some reference to this question having relation to the setting up of a committee on rules, because it seems to me that we are gradually departing from this practice in this house. I am not suggesting that anyone in particular is responsible for it, but I think the house ought to give consideration in the committee on rules to providing some system whereby private members may be enabled to make oral inquiries of the government on a much wider range of subjects, urgent and otherwise, than are permitted in the discretion of the Speaker at the present time. One day in the British house I noticed that eighty-two questions were asked and answered and supplementary questions were asked at the same time.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yesterday we answered about sixty.

Mr. GRAYDON: They were not answered in the way in which they are answered in Britain, and that is my point. In addition to questions being permitted for a whole hour in Britain, there are hundreds of questions in the same position as the questions to which the Prime Minister has just referred, questions which do not reach the House of Commons at all in the ordinary verbal debate.

I suggest that more latitude should be given because I feel the restrictions at the moment are far too pressing with respect to those seeking information from the government. I do not wish to reflect upon Mr. Speaker who is courteous to us all, but I feel that we ought to have wider latitude on questions. Far too many questions are ruled out on the ground that they are not urgent, that there has not been notice given and that they are too long. I believe these are bases which will not always commend themselves to the members of the house. Now that the rules of the house are to be revised, I suggest that with reference to questions wider latitude be given, and I make that suggestion to the rules committee.

Mr. COLDWELL: May I say one word? I think our rules need a thorough revision. In addition to what the hon. member for Peel has just said, the British house has the custom of giving notice of a question which may be raised for discussion at adjournment; therefore they are able to debate it in some manner.

I am in agreement that private members' days, as we have them in the rules, involve a greater amount of time than is warranted under the circumstances under which we meet here; nevertheless we feel the private members have so few opportunities in the house to