

*Procedure and Organization*

of a parliamentary year and the number of sitting days.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Order. The hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.

**Mr. Fortin:** Would the President of the Privy Council permit me a question at this time?

I would like to ask him this: In view of his statement concerning the allocation of time at different stages of the bill, would he tell us if he would be prepared to amend section 75c so as to insert a certain guarantee for the house, in particular a certain period of time for the study of a bill?

[*English*]

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** I point out to the hon. member that I already indicated that if we put in a limit of greater amounts of time, then for smaller bills that may turn out to be too much and on larger bills it may turn out to be too little. What we want to arrive at is some kind of a median which will provide a basic minimum for any piece of legislation, recognizing, however, that in respect of important bills very much more time will be taken up.

In the last debate it was suggested that the change here is more severe than the procedure being used in the British parliament. The fact of the matter is that in the British parliament the procedure in respect of allocation of time for debate is far more drastic than that proposed here. In that procedure it is customary for the debate on second reading to take only one sitting day. This is generally respected by members and may be enforced by the Speaker if it appears that the time may be exceeded.

It is the general practice in the British parliament to have an order not unlike the one proposed under 16A except that it is confined to three stages of a single bill whereby the committee stage, report stage and third reading are all allocated under the same order. While the practice of the British house provides for a single day to debate whether or not an order has been made, the procedure provided here gives many more opportunities at different stages for the opposition to debate whether or not the order should go, and since the orders are confined to a single stage of a

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

bill they are less encompassing than the British orders.

It has been said in the discussions which took place that you, Mr. Speaker, should be involved in the proceedings. Indeed, there was an article to this effect written by a former colleague of the members of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Douglas Fisher, in respect of the question as to why the Chair had not been involved in these proceedings. Without disclosing the committee discussions in that regard, I think it is fair to point out that there was, I believe, a general consensus that in what is essentially a partisan political matter that is the amount of time to be taken on a matter Mr. Speaker should not be caught in the middle of that particular debate. Reference can be made in that regard to the fact that the British in their allocation of time procedure equally have been very careful not to put Mr. Speaker in the position of having a conflict of interest in which he would have to choose between two contending sides on a political question.

**Mr. Fairweather:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Certainly.

**Mr. Fairweather:** What alternative did the British have to involving the Speaker in these delicate negotiations?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** They have an institution. It is interesting that the hon. member should mention it. I see the hon. member for Peace River is smiling. They have a very able gentleman known as "usual channels", a public servant who negotiates between the government and the official opposition. It is very interesting that "usual channels" in the United Kingdom does not consider the minor parties, for instance, in Canada the N.D.P., in that regard.

**Mr. Woolliams:** They are getting pretty important.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** They certainly think they are anyway. The question has been raised from time to time as to why Standing Order 33—

• (5:30 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard):** Is the hon. member for Lotbinière rising in order to ask a question or to raise a point of order?

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.