

*House of Commons Procedures*

it can depend on external causes or still it can be due to a lack of knowledge of a question or its circumstances.

In fact, many things must be taken into consideration. The Speaker must be acquainted with the matter. For example, there is the case of the rain-making operations in the Saguenay-Lake St. John area. Many problems with which the Speaker is not familiar may crop up.

That is why we say that, in such a case, the opposition must have the right to appeal from the Speaker's ruling to make him understand the matter. Then it will be up to the house to decide by a vote whether it should maintain or reverse that ruling, as the case may be. But as long as this system is in force, we will be unable to accept the changes proposed in resolution No. 15.

Besides, it is also a matter of justice for the opposition parties because that is our only way to protest legally when for some reason or other, which might have nothing to do with the Speaker, efforts are made to prevent us from getting justice. That is the only weapon at the disposal of the third parties to get justice in this house when they are not satisfied with the Speaker's ruling.

It was also suggested that this undermines the Speaker's authority. On the contrary, I think it strengthens it. In fact—and I am always thinking in terms of our present conditions—if we leave full freedom of decision to the Speaker, it simply becomes a dictature, directed against the opposition. Because since the Speaker comes from a party and is selected by a party, he is inclined to follow his party. As long as these conditions prevail, I maintain that the right of appeal from the Speaker's rulings will ensure the fairness and authority of the Chair. Knowing that his rulings can be appealed may cause the Speaker to think twice before making a ruling. In my opinion, far from undermining the Chair's authority, it strengthens it by helping the Speaker to make fair rulings while they might have been not as fair for the various reasons I have given. An appeal from the Speaker's ruling allows the house to consider the whole question with him; then, if the vote taken is in favour of maintaining his ruling, it means that the appeal was not valid; on the other hand, if the Speaker is overruled, justice is done to the opposition parties. Even in that case, the Speaker's authority is confirmed as far as the principles of justice are concerned.

I believe the Speaker is there to uphold the rules of the house, but he must be the

[Mr. Gauthier.]

first to respect them and he must endeavour not to break them.

I am sure that the knowledge that his decision can be appealed will refresh the Speaker's memory; it is a constant reminder that he, himself, must first of all, observe the rules and then, have the others observe them as well.

Others have claimed that the purpose of this provision is also to make the house more effective. I think that the first reform to make to ensure the effectiveness of the house—and I said something about that at the outset—would merely be to eliminate confidence votes. Then the house would be more effective but it would not be so through the abolition of the right to appeal the Speaker's ruling. Indeed such an appeal can only delay the business of the house for 15 or 20 minutes. If the government had proposed, in its reforms, the abolition of want of confidence votes, which enables the government to pass legislation that the opposition does not like, whenever the latter wants to keep on governing, that would have been more effective. By means of the want of confidence vote, the government forces us, should we want to keep on with the administration of the business of this country without defeating the government, to accept measures that we regard as bad and that we would not want to accept; but not wishing to overthrow the government, thus causing the population a further expense in the tens of millions of dollars, we are forced to accept some of that legislation. In my opinion, resolution No. 15 and the provision relating to appeals against the Speaker's rulings has nothing to do with the efficiency of government.

I would now like to say a few words on paragraph 3 of resolution No. 15 which proposes mealtime sittings.

My motto has always been, Mr. Chairman, that there is a proper time for everything. When it is time to work, one works; when it is time to eat, one eats; when it is time to rest, one rests. I am surprised to see that in order to increase the weekly sitting hours, we shall have to work while eating or to eat while working.

● (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Chairman, should a manufacturer follow such a rule, he would soon be bankrupt. If, in order to accelerate the business of the house, we must sacrifice our lunch and dinner hours, you will agree with me that we cannot work and eat while sitting here.

To me, this is another gimmick on the part of the government to have the greatest pos-