

is concerned, but I hope that these suggestions will be received in the spirit in which they have been prepared, namely, with the object of the improvement of our debate and thus for the good of Parliament.

If it meets with the approval of honourable Members, I would suggest that the text be printed in *Votes and Proceedings*.

#### READING OF SPEECHES

There can be no doubt that there is a rule prohibiting the reading of speeches, an unwritten one, if you wish, but a rule which is firmly based on custom and on several Speakers' rulings, both in the United Kingdom and in Canada.

What is the rule? May, in his latest edition, the 15th edition, at pages 424 and 425, comments as follows:

"A member is not permitted to read his speech, but may refresh his memory by a reference to notes. The reading of written speeches, which has been allowed in other deliberative assemblies, has never been recognized in either House of Parliament. A member may read extracts from documents, but his own language must be delivered *bona fide* in the form of an unwritten composition. The purpose of this rule is primarily to maintain the cut and thrust of debate, which depends upon successive speakers moulding their speeches to some extent upon the arguments of earlier speeches, and decays under a regime of set speeches prepared beforehand without reference to each other.

"As the real purpose of the rule is to preserve the spirit of debate, it is not unreasonably relaxed in the case of opening speeches, whenever there is special reason for precision of statement, as in the case of important ministerial statements especially on foreign affairs, or matters which involve agreements with outside bodies, or highly technical bills. Even at a later stage of a debate prepared statements on such subjects are read without objection being taken, though they should not constitute an entire speech. 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 honourable member appear to be unusually full, or that the honourable member has provided himself with rather copious notes". *English House of Commons Debates* (1935-36) 307, c.385; *Ibid.* (1937-38) 330, c.1494.

This is the rule in the United Kingdom.

In Canada, although the rule existed then, the House saw fit on April 19, 1886, to adopt a resolution, not a Standing Order, but a resolution, moved by Mr. John Charlton, Member for North Norfolk, seconded by Mr. Joseph R. Dundas, Member for South Victoria (Ontario), two private Members, condemning what it called "the growing practice in the Canadian House of Commons of delivering speeches of great length, having the character of carefully and elaborately prepared written essays, and indulging in voluminous and often irrelevant extracts". The House on that day expressed the view that the above mentioned growing practice is "destructive of legitimate and pertinent debate upon public questions, is a waste of valuable time, unreasonably lengthens the sessions of Parliament, threatens, by increased bulk and cost, to lead to the abolition of the *Official Report of the Debates*, encourages a discursive and diffuse, rather than an incisive and concise style of public speaking, is a marked contrast to the practice in regard to debate that prevails in the British House of Commons and tends to repel the public from a careful and intelligent consideration of the proceedings of Parliament". (*Canadian Journals*, Vol. XX, p. 167, 1886).