

Hansard—Altering of Report

eliminating *Hansard* in committee and reporting only speeches made when the Speaker was in the chair. In the order of reference of the committee on debates which studied the matter—and this is found at page 504 in 1924—one question before it was this:

2. Whether it is desirable, in the interests of economy of time, labour and expense, that the report of the debates in *Hansard* should be limited to set speeches as may be delivered when Mr. Speaker is in the chair, with or without a brief report of proceedings in committee.

On the other hand, in the United Kingdom when the house sits late at night whereas they do not allow members to go upstairs to correct their speeches, they will allow this, and it is a suggestion reported in the *Journal of the Society of Clerks at the Table in Empire Parliaments* for 1947, page 38, volume 16:

It is suggested that in the case of these later speeches members should not seek to do any revision later than 10.30 p.m., except on special points of difficulty or doubt, involving names, figures, or quotations.

As I said before, if we had been in different circumstances than those which prevailed just a few minutes before six o'clock on Friday night, the matter would have been dealt with in the house.

I believe that from now on it should be made certain, and I think the house will agree with me, that the editor of debates should, if these rulings I have quoted constitute a proper authority for the manner in which hon. members want to have their *Hansard* protected, be guided by those rulings without any reference whatever to anybody else. If an alteration is to be made in our debates, the matter should be dealt with on the floor of the house. This matter of the Speaker or the Clerk or anyone else having to do with this editing of debates, and being called upon to judge what may be taken out or put in, is putting those persons in the position of being censors. There is always the chance—as a matter of fact I would say it would be an illusion to think that if any material changes are made to *Hansard* they will not be picked up.

As hon. members know, the transcript of speeches made in this house is issued to the press gallery about 20 minutes after the take is reported. Members can always have access to the editor's room to check the speeches that are being made. There are all those hon. members who were in the house at the time the speech was made, most of whom have very good memories and can recall what was said. We cannot therefore eliminate something from *Hansard* without there being a chance that some repercussions will take place. I think the minister himself

[Mr. Speaker.]

did know that, and I certainly knew it. At the time I conceded to what I thought was a reasonable request by the minister, based on the fact he was in committee of supply and was dealing with figures. Under the circumstances, they appeared to be minor alterations such as would be allowed according to the guiding rule recommended by the committee on debates in 1948 and concurred in by the house.

What are we going to do in the present circumstances? We are in the full house, and we are exercising our powers. I think, myself, that the words that have been omitted, now that they have been repeated in the statement made by the minister, should be reinserted in the revised edition where they should have been all along. It is a matter which is now of public concern, and I would suggest that the words eliminated be reinstated. They are not so considerable as some hon. members may think. I have the typescript here, and the omissions consist of two phrases in the reply made by the minister to the hon. member for Quebec West (Mr. Dufresne). There is one where it says, "They used only 6,000 pounds of margarine. Then they had other fats, neither margarine nor butter, amounting to 53,000 pounds." Then, later, the figures omitted were, "13,591 pounds of margarine and 103,146 pounds of other fats." Those are the words that have been omitted.

My ruling at this point would be—

Mr. Drew: I trust there will be no ruling until you have heard the views of hon. members.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) has just said, "I hope there will be no ruling until you have heard from hon. members." I do not know exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has in mind, but the editing of the debates is in the hands of an employee of the house who is under the authority of the Speaker. If advice is required, he seeks it from the officials, that is the ones who are above him, and in this case that is what he has done. The Speaker takes full responsibility for what he has done and at the first opportunity submits what he has done to the house.

Now, I did indicate why I took the action that I did. It is because I have doubts that I propose to redress the situation by suggesting that the words omitted be reinserted.

I would tell the Leader of the Opposition that I could even go a step farther and at this moment I could submit my conduct to the house and ask for the yeas and nays.

Mr. Drew: May I, in deference, submit to you that before you do anything that purports