

*The Address—Mr. Allmand*

occasion the government was defeated on one clause by one vote. This is a serious hindrance to ministers and members of the house who must remain in attendance and leave their departmental work and other commitments.

May I offer as suggestion number nine that the question period should be organized so that each minister will be scheduled to answer questions at certain set periods throughout the week, and that they be given at least 24 hours notice of each question unless it is of urgent national importance. Again, this is the rule followed in the United Kingdom.

This system has several benefits. It allows ministers to better organize their time for departmental duties and helps them to prepare answers to questions. I believe it would also provide a more useful question period with better questions and more information, and with less time devoted to political barbs and announcements. On several occasions in this house during the question period I have observed that more than half the allotted time is used for asking questions which are ruled out of order, and rulings by Mr. Speaker giving reasons why they are out of order. If 24 hours notice were required and questions addressed to specific ministers were limited to specific times, I believe we would have better questions and answers and a better question period. I might add that under such a system, just as in England, supplementary questions are allowed from the floor. I think that is quite proper.

● (5:50 p.m.)

My tenth suggestion is that it might be a good idea if private members had the right to second any government or private members bill or motion and that this seconding should be registered in the orders of the day and *Hansard*. In this way a private member would be able to come out in favour of a bill or motion without making a speech, and he would be on record in *Hansard* as being in favour of the particular proposal, whether it be a government or private members bill or motion.

Eleventh, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend that the reading of newspapers in the house be banned. We do not allow smoking, eating or drinking in the house, and I do not think we should allow the reading of newspapers. I very often hear from visitors to our gallery that the thing that disturbs them most, although it is really not that important in substance but causes the greatest scandal, is the reading of newspapers in the house. We do

not allow the smoking of cigarettes or cigars, eating or drinking in the house, and I do not think we should allow the reading of newspapers, because of the scandal that is caused in the public mind. The reading of reviews and textbooks is necessary in the house because sometimes hon. members need them in making a speech, but I do not think the reading of newspapers is necessary and it should be banned.

Twelfth, with respect to committees I would propose that they be given a larger staff and budget in order to do a better job. Committees have done a very good job. In this respect I differ with the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Kindt), who thinks they have not done a good job. If committees were permitted a larger staff and budget they would be able to do the job still more properly. I think committees are an excellent way of studying legislation in detail and bringing expertise and outside opinions before the house. In the United States and Canada experts cannot come to the house and give their opinions, but through our committees system we could hear expert opinions and thereby do the best job for the Canadian people.

Also with respect to committees, I recommend that they be allowed to sit throughout the session, including periods of recess, and have the power to travel whenever they decide to do so. I also recommend that the quorum for committees be reduced to one third from the present one half of the members. I have studied the rules that apply in the United Kingdom and the United States Congress, and in both those places the quorum is one third. I believe that the volume of business we have to do in the house, in our offices and the library, and considering the number of committees hon. members have to attend, makes it impossible to achieve a quorum of one half of the members. I think this quorum is unrealistic. I disagree with the hon. member for Macleod that many committee meetings had to be delayed because of lack of a quorum. I know that the committees of which I was a member, and I was a member of four, were not delayed for this reason, although I have heard from time to time that committees have been delayed because of lack of a quorum. However, I think this has been the exception rather than the rule.

My thirteenth recommendation is that the proceedings of parliament be made more acceptable to the public. In addition to the televising of parliament and committees, I think something should be done to make *Hansard* more attractive and more widely distributed.