

Since 1958, there have been many changes in our procedure. During the 1960s special committees on procedure met regularly, reporting their recommendations for improving the Standing Orders. The revised rules were adopted on December 20, 1968, with further amendments being adopted in subsequent years.

So between 1958 and 1968, Beauchesne's citations had to be adapted to changing times—it is even stated that after the new Standing Orders were updated in 1968, other improvements were made.

One of the major modifications, as you know, Madam Speaker, was the elimination of the right to appeal the rulings of the Speaker. Just imagine the general outcry that would have happened if a motion introduced then had proposed to eliminate the right to appeal, the protests coming from a party that claims to be conservative and not open to change. However, the changes have effectively been made, Madam Speaker. Today, your rulings cannot be appealed any more, that has been changed. Parliament has evolved into accepting this change, and in spite of those who steadfastly cling to tradition, time marches on, slowly but surely.

There have also been important changes in procedure with regard to appropriation bills. In the past, these were debated in the House sitting in Committee of the Whole, but now they are studied by the standing committees of the House, allowing the latter to deal with other subjects and giving twenty committees or so a chance to do more work.

Madam Speaker, this reminds me that not long ago, a motion I introduced in the House completely upset normal parliamentary procedures in the House.

Remember how, after the last election, changes were approved by the House with a view to rescheduling proceedings on supply bills. We managed to convince the House, which later approved it as perfectly normal and acceptable, that what would normally be looked into in standing committees should come back to the floor of the House sitting in Committee of the Whole. Remember those estimates. We chose the estimates of three separate departments to come back before Committee of the Whole instead of going to standing committees of the House. The House, on the second day of each one of those three periods, sat until midnight, past normal hours; yet, all those changes, those breaks with established practice since 1968 were not contrary to the parliamentary spirit: they were perfectly acceptable. They were the result of a special order of the House and there it was—

Beauchesne says it himself. House proceedings must primarily be governed by written rules, standing, sessional and special orders. Madam Speaker, allow me to quote Beauchesne, fifth edition, Section 7:

Standing, sessional and special orders are the rules and regulations which the House has agreed on for the governance of its own proceedings.

That, then, is how our proceedings are governed. First and foremost by standing, sessional and special orders. Everything else, traditions, authorities, is related to the written rules and to sessional and special orders. Beauchesne, like the others, has

*Point of Order—Mr. Knowles*

to abide by the rules of the House and is subjected to sessional orders, to special orders. Furthermore, Beauchesne has never claimed that he was not subjected to that. He merely says that he interprets current practices, but he does not say that these cannot be changed. And that is where lies the fundamental difference between our own approach to the way we conduct the business of the House, and the approach taken by the hon. members opposite who rose on the point of order tonight.

Madam Speaker, in the fifth edition of Beauchesne, Citation 9 reads as follows and I quote:

9. All rules are passed by the House by a simple majority.

This is crystal clear. Normally, I should sit down now since the matter is altogether settled. But let me go on with this citation:

All rules are passed by the House by a simple majority... there is no procedural reason why any private member or minister of the Crown could not introduce a motion to alter the rules.

All that is in Citation 9.

That being acknowledged, Madam Speaker, the only true way of regulating the business of the House is by means of written rules, sessional or special orders, as required now, which are to be voted upon and which can probably be passed by a simple majority. Let us deal now with traditions and jurisprudence which should be based on written rules and sessional or special orders. I think that Beauchesne is even more broadminded, much less conservative than those whose speeches we have heard up to now.

● (2140)

Parliament, and the manner in which it works, has developed—

I am sorry, I do not want to offend anyone on the other side, but the word “developed” is written in Beauchesne.

Parliament, and the manner in which it works, has developed over centuries and the written rules are relative newcomers to the procedural field. Indeed, increasingly, the written rules are being used, not to codify existing practice, but rather to trim and adjust historic traditions to modern needs.

Madam Speaker, the requirements of the modern era allow us, of course, to introduce motions either to amend the Standing Orders permanently, as noted in Citation 9 of Beauchesne which I quoted earlier, or to ask for sessional orders. I could move a motion tomorrow asking that the House not sit in the evening but in the morning until the end of the session. Of course, members on the other side would say that this goes against our traditions and against parliamentary practice. This is true, but it does not mean that such a motion would be out of order, would be illegal, and would go against the evolution of our procedure if it is to be brought more into line with modern times. A sessional order could therefore bring about such a result, or, as a third option, for a specific debate, we might ask that certain Standing Orders, practices or traditions not apply, and this would not go against parliamentary spirit either. This is all part of the evolution of Parliament.