

House is valuable as experience has shown us in Canada under our present procedure. But one joint Committee in the preliminary stage of petitions and notices may be useful. This Committee should be formed at the very beginning of the session, as soon as the Address in answer to the Speech is agreed to.

Experience under even the present rule of eight days shows that were all private bills required to be presented for examination and printing for a much longer period before the beginning of each session, as is suggested above in accordance with English practice, the public business of both Houses, will under any circumstances be much facilitated.

No doubt the present staff of the Senate, as already intimated, is inadequate for the additional labour that would be entailed on them; but two clerks at least for Committees ought to be sufficient. But this is a matter of which I write with hesitation and in any case a joint Committee on Standing Orders could be in charge of the present efficient officers of the House of Commons, and the Senate clerk detailed for other Committee work.

In the House of Commons little or no additional expense need be incurred by the proposed changes. In the Senate the Chairman of Committee, should be paid, and two or three clerks of committees might be added to the present staff. In any case the total amount of fees received every session for private bill legislation is quite large, (See appendix D), and it would be very easy to increase the fees by at least ten per cent., that is from \$200 to \$220 on each bill.

Enough has been said in this review to show the difficulties that stand in the way of the proposed changes. *The success of the whole system must rest in a great measure on the early presentation and printing of bills, before the session, so as to ensure their division at once between the two Houses.* Hitherto there has been great laxity on all sides, both on the part of promoters, and of the House itself, in affording too many facilities for the suspension and even evasion of the rules which, as even now framed, are intended to press forward private legislation. If promoters and parliamentary agents know that the rules will be rigidly enforced, as in England, and there is no reason whatever for allowing negligence or procrastination on the part of legal counsel, the difficulty that I apprehend may soon disappear, and the business of the Houses be facilitated.

In one respect, however, there may be some disadvantage from a public point of view in giving the Senate the initiation of a large proportion of important private bills, involving questions of public policy and sectional or private interests. The important heads of Departments, like Finance, Railways, Public Works, Interior, and Customs, &c., sit in the House of Commons, and on its Private Bill Committees. For instance, the Chairman of the most important Committee, Railways and Canals, is the present Minister of Public Works. Ministers are always present on all the Committees to protect the public interests. This practice does not prevail in England, where the Standing Orders are more complicated and numerous in order to guard public interests and relieve the Ministers so far as practicable from attendance on Committees. In Canada the presence of Ministers is unavoidable. In the Senate the members generally have not only the leisure to give full attention to this class of legislation, but there are not a few men in that body especially competent to deal with Banking, Commerce, and other subjects of public interest. The absence of important heads of departments in the Senate, however, may be considered as tending to render that body less competent than the Commons to watch over private legislation. This is a question on which I do not venture to dwell, and will only suggest that, in all probability, if the Chairmen of Committees devote themselves to their duties, Ministers will find their responsibilities much lessened; since it would be the special functions of those chairmen, as in England, to examine and report on every bill that may affect the public interests.