

Standing Orders

work of the house should not be held up at the whim of one member. The suggested amendment is that it should be necessary for four members to rise in their places, not simply shout out that they object, and indicate that they are objecting to the granting of unanimous consent.

To sum up briefly, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish any member of this house to feel that this resolution is intended to encroach in any way upon the right and duty of an opposition group to criticize or discuss legislation that is brought before the house. I believe that is a paramount duty, and a paramount right. I believe that recently Mr. Churchill stated this in a very clear fashion when he was a member of the opposition. I shall read from a part of one of his speeches:

The house is not only a machine for legislation. It is a great forum of debate and the process of legislation is not necessarily smooth because it is rapid and violent. The house ought to have the opportunity of moulding and shaping the laws which afterwards have to be obeyed by the people.

As I mentioned a short time ago, in addition to that cardinal rule, to me it is equally important that we should have majority rule. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gordon Graydon (Peel): In joining this debate, Mr. Speaker, I must say that the remarks I shall have to make will be in somewhat unprepared style because I have not made any notes for a criticism paragraph by paragraph of the hon. member's resolution. Today I want, if I may, to discuss one or two matters which have been very close to my heart and attention during these years in the House of Commons. They are related to matters of which this resolution forms at least a part.

In common with others who have sat in this house for a good many years and have witnessed its deliberations, I have felt that there were streamlined reforms which parliament, in the light of its importance to the Canadian people and to democracy, ought to institute. I am quite sure that any of us who have, for instance, conversed with those who have sat in the galleries of this august chamber from time to time have found some rather interesting criticism from those who have witnessed for the first time the procedures of the great House of Commons. I am not going to detail those criticisms because they are so well known to every member that I need not bore the house with a repetition of them. There is no doubt in my mind that, whether or not we like it, there is a desire on the part of the public and the members of all parties to see if we cannot get a somewhat better procedure and better general working conditions in this parliament.

[Mr. Cleaver.]

One thing that has concerned most of us throughout the years has been the disposition towards longer sessions of the house, and in some instances of late to more sessions. I am not so sure however that all the criticism which has been levelled against parliamentarians concerning the length of time we sit here is entirely deserved. It may well be that we take too long in many of the discussions that are held, but do not let us forget the extent of the business which this parliament now handles as compared to what it was when I first came into this house with the hon. member who moved this resolution. A comparison between the work in those days and what it is now indicates that perhaps we are conducting the business of the house in almost as rapid a fashion as we were then.

Perhaps we could take as our yardstick the amount of money which is now requested in the estimates. I recall being appalled and dismayed—an opposition member always is appalled or dismayed over something—over the fact that we were spending almost \$500 million in the budget of 1936. I cannot recall now what I said at that time, but I am quite sure that I took the government to task in no uncertain way and told them to make sure they would never let that kind of thing happen again. Of course, as usual, my advice was not heeded, so today we are in a position where eight and a half times that amount of money is being spent in one year by the federal government. It may be said that that is not an indication of the extent or comprehensiveness of the work of parliament, but it at least does serve as a yardstick for measuring the breadth of subjects with which parliament is concerned in these days. There was an added acceleration during the time of the war, and during the period of rehabilitation and reconstruction there was a still greater acceleration of that situation until today I am quite certain that many of the modes of procedure which were quite good in 1867, or even in 1936, are not now adequate. The sooner we can come to the conclusion that some changes have to be made, the better for parliament, the better for the country and the better for democracy itself.

I do not think we can approach this with any degree of dogma. We have to consider all the suggestions which are made in good faith from all sides of the chamber. This is not a party matter, it is a matter of settling our democratic procedure in this chamber for the conduct of business.

One thing which, from time to time, has been criticized in the press and in other places is the long-winded speeches that are made by backbenchers for the consumption