

Standing Orders

First, I think we should change the hours of sitting as recommended last year by the committee so that the house sits from two-thirty o'clock in the afternoon until ten o'clock at night. Then the length of speeches should be reduced from forty to thirty minutes. As I pointed out, if that were done and if every member who spoke took his full time you would actually have seven and a half more speeches in the week than you have at the present time. There would be a more pleasant feeling in the house and at the same time more work would be done.

There is one other matter which would not require a change in the standing orders and the rules; it simply requires that the present rules should be carried out. Speeches should not be read in this house. I know some hon. members will say that that is easier said than done, that it is hard to enforce that rule. There are many occasions when it would be quite simple to ask a member to stop reading his speech. When a member holds up his speech and is reading it word for word and line for line, what he is doing becomes quite obvious. It is all very well for him to say he is just referring to some very copious notes but it is easy enough to tell when a member is reading a speech, and I say that so long as that is a breach of the rule it should not be allowed. If on the other hand the house feels that members should be allowed to read their speeches, then let us amend the rule and permit them to do so; but as long as the rule exists I think the practice of reading speeches should be discontinued. I am satisfied that if the rule were enforced it would also help to expedite the business of the house. Speeches would be far more interesting to listen to and we would know for certain that a member was expressing his own views instead of perhaps merely reading views expressed by somebody else and put in the form of writing for the member.

Those are the three things I think should be done. I think we would be making a big mistake to try to carry out the recommendations covered by the resolution. I am satisfied that in the first place it would take a very long debate on amending the rules to put a thing of that kind into operation, and in the second place I think if it were done it would cause a good deal of confusion and dissatisfaction in the house.

Mr. Pierre Gauthier (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to the speeches that have been delivered since the beginning of this debate, and I must tell the house that there are some points of view that have been expressed with which I agree and others with which I do not agree.

Let me take the last point made by the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch) about the reading of speeches. I have sat in the House of Commons for twenty-eight or twenty-nine sessions. That is a long time. I have had quite an experience listening to speeches whether read or delivered extemporaneously. In my opinion there is a psychological problem involved. Sometimes you see a member get up for the first time in a deliberative assembly and after talking for five or ten minutes he then tries to fill out the rest of his speech with the remainder of the strength left in his legs. That is psychological. He cannot face such an assembly whereas he can face a crowd on the hustings, on a public platform.

Everyone here will admit that the atmosphere of the House of Commons is quite different from that of the public platform. When you are on the public platform you have many friends gathered around to support you. In the House of Commons you have people who are very objective in their thinking. They are of different parties but they are accustomed to listening to speeches. Some of them read newspapers. Others talk. Others go out and others come in. They attend to their own business. Do you think such an atmosphere helps a speaker who is a little shy and timid in delivering a speech without reading it? I think the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon) was right this afternoon when he said he had no quarrel with those who read speeches.

Mr. Graydon: Provided they write them themselves.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): I shall come to that. I am not prepared to say that all the speeches read in the house have been prepared by others. Most of the time the speech is prepared by the one who is speaking. He cannot express himself properly without reading his speech because, in vulgar language—I do not quite know how to express it otherwise—he has not got the guts to express himself.

An hon. Member: Intestinal fortitude.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): As my hon. friend says, intestinal fortitude. Therefore he has to read his speech. In academies of science, philosophy and so on all the speeches are read and the level of the discussion is not lowered because of that fact. Speeches are not longer because they are read. I think some of the speeches delivered in the house—mine, for instance—would have been better if they had been prepared ahead of time in written form, and I am accustomed to the House of Commons.

Mr. Graydon: You are pretty good.