

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

procedures are traditional and old fashioned and some think them not functional. Many traditional procedures are valuable, and indeed essential.

Little can be said in defence of our voting procedure, and much can be said against it. The charge of time wasting is often heard. The government accuses the opposition of wasting time, and I suppose many people who have spoken think that the other fellow who is speaking is wasting time. That is the usual attitude.

I think, however, that our voting procedure here is a complete anachronism. The observer of our chamber hears Mr. Speaker use the time worn expression "call in the members", and he watches the members leave the chamber. What happens in the interval? The members wait, and wait, and wait until a vote is taken. This voting process is laborious and difficult for the officials of the house, and time consuming in the extreme.

● (10:10 p.m.)

I have been watching during the few years I have been here—now close to ten—the number of hours which have been spent in waiting for votes to be called and taken. In the twenty third parliament we spent five hours and 40 minutes. In the fourth session of the twenty fourth parliament we spent 24 hours sitting, waiting, and waiting. I have calculated that since I came to this house we have spent the equivalent of 30 sitting days waiting for votes and having the votes counted. This is a serious factor, and one which should be considered by those who are anxious to improve our procedures.

Lovers of tradition may say we should not lay careless hands on matters of this kind. But our method of voting here is not part of the procedure at Westminster, the mother of parliaments. There, they literally divide the house and their voting process is much quicker than ours. Of course, we tend to wait for members to come in. An example of the ludicrous nature of that procedure occurred not long ago when one ambulance arrived bearing a member of the opposition and another brought a supporter of the government, and both men were carried in to cast their votes. It would have been much better had they obeyed their doctors' orders and stayed in bed.

An electronic device would make possible the instant recording, counting and revealing of the votes of all members. It would be a great time saver. It would be a magnificent aid to making the time we spend here more

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

useful and valuable. If such device were installed, I believe that one of the rights available should be a right which would allow for an abstention. Abstentions have taken place for many years in the British parliament. Though it is hard to believe that any Irishman would not take part in a discussion or an argument, the Irishmen under Parnell abstained from time to time. Certainly in a house where there are several parties there should be a means by which a member could register his presence but indicate that he supported neither the amendment, say, nor the motion which was before the chamber.

So, in the words which the Secretary of State is said to have used in connection with the new Member of the Administration (Mr. Gordon), I would ask the leader of the house to "get with it", and move in the direction I am suggesting. If he cannot take steps to introduce an electronic voting machine now, then at least let him place before the committee on procedure, which I hope the house will soon set up, sample machines whose efficiency may be studied in the interest of their adoption and the improvement of our technique, so that all of us here may spend our time better than in waiting and waiting for a vote to be taken.

**Mr. J. B. Stewart (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works):** The hon. member for Queens is urging that electronic voting machines be installed for the purpose of recording votes in this chamber. He is concerned mainly about the time consumed by our practice of calling in the members and then having the members rise in their places to be recognized and counted. I must say that this may seem ponderous and a waste of time in an era when party loyalty normally leads all members of all parties to follow their leaders. It is not easy to see how the installation of electronic voting machines would overcome the principal time-consuming phase of this process—the phase in which the members are being called in. The machine could speed up the actual counting of members, but that would save only a small part of the total time now taken.

Moreover, sir, I think the hon. member would agree that if we were to resort immediately to the use of electronic voting machines we would hardly be beginning the modernization of our procedure. I doubt that we shall achieve a genuine improvement in our procedure in the house until most members have cause to feel that they are damaging themselves or their party, or both, by long, rambling and repetitious speeches. If the