

*Hansard—Altering of Report*

is considered by the house that what has been taken out should not have been taken out.

I want hon. members to realize this position. In the first place, what is *Hansard*? Hon. members think it is the official report of debates, and so it is. But in what sense is it the official report of debates? I want to say this to hon. members for their consideration because now that I have an opportunity to deal with this matter I should like to deal with it as thoroughly as I can.

The editor of *Hansard* and myself, and I presume the Clerk, are in a difficult position because of a custom which has been established over the years of members going to the *Hansard* office to revise their typescript. Some make very few revisions but others make numerous revisions and it is sometimes difficult for the editor and myself to decide just where we should stop in accepting revisions that are being made.

According to the Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, *Hansard* is a report as accurate as possible of the debates, but it is official only in the sense that it is published, not by an outside contractor but by persons who are employees of the House of Commons. I find the Speaker's remarks in *Parliamentary Affairs*, page 218, volume 2, 1948-49. In reply to a question in which a member was talking about an amendment which had not been referred to in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker said:

I can assure the right hon. and gallant gentleman that the mere fact that he has raised that point will automatically put the matter right. I think the right hon. and gallant gentleman said that it was a mistake in the official report. *Hansard* is not an official report. It is, I hope, as accurate an account of our proceedings as possible. The official report is one which it is my duty, the house remembers, by resolution passed at the beginning of every session, to peruse daily. I did peruse the official report, which is the accurate one, and it says "Another amendment made", which is the correct wording. Therefore, officially the amendment is correct and in order, and I hope that what I have said, and what the right hon. and gallant gentleman has said, will ensure that the matter is put right in *Hansard*.

In other words, there is a distinction between *Hansard* and *Votes and Proceedings*. *Votes and Proceedings* is the only volume that is official in the sense that evidence of it has to be accepted by the courts. Now, if hon. members will permit me, I want to ask, what is the authority of the Speaker with respect to *Hansard*? Some may think that, because there is a standing committee which is appointed at the beginning of every session, the standing committee is the one that should be the supreme authority with respect to anything that goes into *Hansard*. I wish to submit that it is not exactly so.

[Mr. Speaker.]

In the first place, the standing committee is not an administrative body and does not deal with anything unless something is referred to it by the house. As a matter of fact, once our standing committees are appointed there is always a motion that follows to indicate that they be empowered to do such and such, namely to deal with anything that may be referred to them from time to time. Hon. members will find that in their *Votes and Proceedings* at the beginning of every session.

Therefore, the standing committee on debates does not deal with current matters such as the one with which we are concerned at the moment. The position here is similar to that in the United Kingdom, and it is as follows. I quote from *Parliamentary Affairs*, volume 5, 1951-52, which states the position in the United Kingdom:

The official report began in 1909 and the committee, whose terms of reference were extended to enable them "to assist Mr. Speaker" in the arrangements for it, became the "Pub. and Deb." which still exists to this day. "Assistance" is the most they can give, as responsibility for the production of the official report rests solely upon the Speaker.

In our own house, the situation is the same, because we had sessional committees until 1906, and on July 10, 1906, the committee on debates was made a standing committee. As I said a moment ago, it is not an administrative committee; it is one which is not called upon to sit unless some matters are referred to it by the house.

Having stated what my responsibility is in the matter, I should like to tell hon. members as briefly as I can what I consider to be the guiding principles which I think the editor of debates should follow in accepting revisions which are suggested, and the guiding principles which I follow myself.

I wish to interject here that during the last recess I had a long conversation with the associate editor of debates, and we talked about this problem of hon. members revising the transcripts of their notes. "I pointed out to him that he would receive my full co-operation in trying to maintain as closely as possible the original text as the speeches were pronounced in this house and to accept revisions only when they were minor alterations or when they were merely corrections for the purpose of improving the vocabulary or correcting grammatical errors."

I told him that I had looked at the authorities in the United Kingdom, that they were specific on the point, and that I thought it would be the wish of our house that the same rules that exist over there should exist here.