

In order to facilitate the examination of Private Bills, previous to the session of Parliament, it is a Standing Order of the Commons :

" Every petition for a private bill, headed by a short title, descriptive of the undertaking or bill, corresponding with that at the head of the advertisement, with a declaration, signed by the agent, and a printed copy of the bill annexed shall be deposited in the Private Bill Office on or before the 21st of December and such Petition, Bill and Declaration, shall be open to the inspection of all parties."

It is also a rule that copies of all bills shall, at the same time, be deposited with the Board of Trade, Treasury, or other department under whose special supervision they may come.

Another Standing Order provides that, " In all cases where application is intended to be made for leave to bring in a Bill relating to any of the Two Classes of Private Bills, Notice shall be given stating the objects of such intended application, and the time at which copies of the Bill will be deposited in the Private Bill Office."

All these rules are intended to facilitate an examination of the Bills *before* the Session by the Chairmen of Committees in the two Houses, and by the Examiners of Petitions, whose duty it is especially to report upon the proposed distribution between the two Houses and compliance or non-compliance with the Standing Orders.

With respect to the Examiners of Petitions and Standing Orders, just mentioned, it is necessary to explain that, some years ago, the Lords adopted a most convenient arrangement, which dispensed with a double proof of all those orders which are common to both Houses, except in certain cases. They appointed, as " examiners of Standing Orders," the gentlemen who hold the office of examiners of petitions in the House of Commons. By this arrangement the examiners, acting on behalf of both Houses, now adjudicate upon all facts relating to the compliance or non-compliance with the Standing Orders, and the Standing Orders Committee in each House, determines upon the facts as reported or certified to them, whether the Standing Orders ought or ought not to be dispensed with. All parliamentary authorities agree that of all the improvements, connected with private bill legislation, none have been so signal as those in which the examiners were constituted, and both Houses concurred for the assimilation and joint proof of their Standing Orders.

I may mention here that the duties of the Chairmen of Committees and of the Examiners in the English Houses are quite onerous, as the rules and regulations affecting the introduction, the provisions and the passage of Private Bills are very complicated and rigidly enforced, while their observance entails a great expense on petitioners and promoters, and makes the business of parliamentary agents and counsel a most lucrative profession in England. The rules in Canada are much more simple and the expenses of private bill legislation relatively small, and suited to the conditions of a country where it is necessary to give every encouragement to enterprise and capital. Some reasons why these rules are so full and rigid in England will be stated towards the end of this memorandum.

Another duty discharged by the Chairman of the Lords' Committees may here be mentioned in order to show the various steps taken to facilitate the progress of a bill through the Lords, and to make its provisions as perfect as possible. While a bill is before the Commons, it is the practice to lay it before the Chairman in question, and give effect to his observations during the progress of the bill through the Commons. The amendments suggested in the Lords are thus embodied with the other amendments before the bill has passed the Commons ; and unless the bill be opposed, its progress through the Lords is at once easy and expeditious.