

*Standing Orders*

in one week in the British house. Apparently the practice there is that on Thursday the government announces the business of the house for the whole of the following week. I should now like to read from the British *Hansard* of February 28 of this year:

## Business of the House

Mr. Attlee: May I ask the leader of the house to state the business for next week?

It is not for one day but for "next week". The answer is as follows:

Monday, 3rd March—Supply (2nd allotted day): Committee stage of the civil estimates and estimates for revenue departments vote on account, 1952-53.

A debate will take place on the appointment of Lord Waverley as chairman of the royal commission on the taxation of profits and income.

Tuesday, 4th March—Supply (3rd allotted day):

Then follows the detail.

Wednesday, 5th March—Debate on defence, which will take place on a government motion to approve the white paper.

On looking up the British *Hansard* for March 5 I find that Mr. Churchill opened the debate. In the motherland the debate on defence is of course quite as important as the debate on defence in our House of Commons. Defence is a very important subject at the present time. The debate on this subject was limited to one day. It started at 3.35 p.m. and continued until 9.58 p.m. when the question was put on a recorded division. Sixteen members took part in the debate and their average speaking time was about eighteen minutes. The house then proceeded with the other work indicated on the agenda for that day and sat until 2 a.m. On the following day, March 6, the house dealt with the navy estimates, and anticipating that the debate would go beyond ten o'clock a motion was moved extending the hours of the sitting. It was in this form:

That this day the business of supply may be taken after ten o'clock and shall be exempted from the provisions of standing order No. 1, sittings of the house.

That motion, as provided for in their standing orders, was carried without amendment and without any debate. The standing order in that regard is standing order No. 1, paragraph 6(b). On March 6 the house went on with the navy estimates. Then on Friday the house reached private members' day, half of which I believe is taken up with private members' bills and the other half with private members' motions. On checking through the record for that week I find the agenda for the entire week was carried through in regular fashion as announced on the Thursday before without any quibbling or any cross-fire about it. The government simply announced that on this, that and the other day the house would do a certain part of the business of the country.

[Mr. Cleaver.]

Hon. members may wonder how that can be brought about. Apparently in the British rules there are two instruments. One is closure under standing orders 29 and 30. Any member may move closure but to be operative it must have a majority support of 100. The other remedy is the passage of time allocation orders with respect to individual subjects, commonly termed the guillotine. It is very seldom used. The first occasion I could find when it was used was back in 1932, and if members would like to refer to the 1932 British *Hansard*, fifth series, volume 269, page 1320, they will be able to obtain full information with respect to it. I could not find any recent illustration. Apparently the very fact that the power is there is all that is necessary to achieve the result. I understand the practice is that the parties of the house, through their whips or other representatives, reach an agreement as to what time of the house will be devoted to a particular subject. Then after the length of time is decided upon the Speaker allots the time to the government and the opposition in total. In turn the whips of the parties reach agreement among their own members as to the members who will speak and the amount of time they will be allowed. I am told that if any member is foolish enough to abuse his privilege of speaking and takes more time than is allotted to him the Speaker just does not see him again for a session or two. The end result of all this is that there they have an orderly procedure. Every member knows in advance what subject is coming up on a given day. He has full opportunity to get ready for it. The time of debate is limited to the point where time is precious. They do not have any of this dreary reading of well-written essays. They have a lively and constructive debate on the subjects before them. Time is precious and should be treated in that way.

If I may come now to the five specific amendments I have suggested I should like to state at once that so far as I am concerned, after even a short study of the British practice, I should very much like to see our House of Commons follow the practice of Westminster in its entirety. I am frank to admit, however, that I believe it would be such a shock to some members of this house that a transition period might be necessary, so we should be perhaps a little more moderate in adopting the practice at Westminster.

Now coming to the five specific amendments, the first is:

(a) For the passage of allocation time orders by this house with respect to any measure brought before it and that motions for allocation time orders