

*Rules of the House*

Mr. BENNETT: I have listened with much interest to the observations of my hon. friend from Macleod, of the Minister of Justice, and of the hon. member for Frontenac-Addington with respect to the opening of the House at three o'clock. In England it used to be the custom to open at four o'clock, but looking up the rule recently I found that the House there meets at two forty-five. Might we not compromise in this House and meet at that hour?

Mr. GUTHRIE: Why?

Mr. BENNETT: For the reason that the fifteen minutes between two forty-five and three o'clock would give us time to dispose of a good deal of routine business of the House, so that at three o'clock we might be able to direct our attention to the regular program. There is only one objection to this suggestion and that is the possibility of its interfering with ministers in council in the discharge of their duties. That is the only difficulty I can see. In this country the cabinet meets practically every day during the session usually at two o'clock, and whether forty-five minutes would be sufficient time for the disposal of the business on hand it is difficult for one who occupied the position for so short a time, and who was not in office during the session, to determine. It does occur to me however that we might effect a compromise by meeting at two-forty five.

With respect to the hour of closing, may I point out to my hon. friends from Quebec South and Frontenac-Addington that the House always has control of its own proceedings, and it would be only necessary at any time for the Prime Minister to give notice that on such a date the rule for eleven o'clock closing would be suspended. The Prime Minister to-day, for instance, gives notice that on and after a given date we shall sit in the mornings. If this rule now proposed were adopted, its operation could be eliminated at any time upon notice being given. In the main I am prepared to accept the findings of the committee, but in view of the remarks that have been made I may point out that in England they adjourn at eleven-thirty. It is fixed by rule in England, notwithstanding what my hon. friend says, that at eleven-thirty, in some circumstances, and at five o'clock and eleven o'clock in other cases the House adjourns. They also have a special rule in their procedure whereby it is provided that a minister may give notice, and when the House signifies its acceptance of his motion the eleven o'clock or eleven-thirty or five o'clock closing rule does not prevail. It seems to me that that would meet our difficulty;

[Mr. Lapointe.]

if we wanted to sit until midnight it would only be necessary for the Prime Minister or the minister in charge of the measure under consideration to give notice the day before that the next day the rule in respect of the eleven o'clock closing would not apply, until the question under consideration was finished. For instance, the whole budget debate might be treated in that way, which would overcome the difficulty mentioned. In the main I am glad to support these recommendations.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: I consider that we had very satisfactory meetings of this committee; our object all the way through was to devise changes in the rules upon which we could all agree, and in our report we were unanimous. The hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Coote) and the hon. member for Frontenac-Addington (Mr. Edwards) took different views; one wanted to sit later and the other to adjourn earlier, but this report is a compromise. I came into this House a great many years ago and from my very first session I felt that we should amend the rules in order to close earlier in the evening and to have shorter speeches; in that way we would be kept here a shorter time and the business of the House would be done more quickly. I am very glad to have been a member of this committee and to have had a part in drawing up these recommendations, which I think will help very much in expediting business and in allowing us to get home at an earlier hour than has been the case in the past. It seems to me that wise men would hardly agree that they should sit here until four or five o'clock in the morning, as has been done many times in my experience, and I hope that that practice will be stopped. The hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Bennett) has explained about the hour of closing; that matter is entirely in the hands of the House and by giving notice the rule can be suspended. Of course, when closure is brought in we have not suggested stopping at an earlier hour than that provided in the old rules, which is two o'clock in the morning. It may be as some hon. members have said, that this will lead to greater time being taken in discussing these matters, and in such case I suppose we will have closure often; so far as I am concerned I see no reason why that should not be. I hope the House will adopt these rules as they have been unanimously drawn up by the committee.

Mr. SPENCE (Parkdale): I agree with many hon. members who have spoken that shortening the hours we spend in this House