

*Standing Orders*

to bring down suggestions that would represent a fairly close approximation to unanimity. The first question they tackled was that of the hours of sitting. There was a high degree of agreement on that point; but many of us in that committee felt that it would not be possible for that committee merely to recommend that change in the hours of sitting. After all, that committee has been set up for the purpose of helping to expedite the business of the house. Therefore, if they had merely recommended that we shorten the hours of sitting, the net result would have been the lengthening of the sessions of the house rather than the shortening of them. Hence it was considered wise to tie in with that recommendation one to the effect that the length of speeches should be cut down from forty minutes to thirty minutes.

Unfortunately, that recommendation did not gain the same degree of agreement as did the one for a change in the hours of sitting. But even on that point there was a fairly high degree of support. Seventy-five per cent of the parties supported it, the Conservative party being the only party that was opposed to it. For that reason—and I would say for that reason alone—it was considered wise to make the recommendation in regard to the hours of sitting as a permanent affair, which would have required an amendment to the standing orders; but in regard to the shortening or the limitation of speeches, the recommendation was merely that as an experiment for one session we would have the speeches shortened from forty minutes to thirty minutes.

Personally, I thought that was a reasonable suggestion and I had hoped that it would receive the support of all parties. But as I mentioned a moment ago, the Progressive Conservative party could not see their way clear to support it; and for that reason, I presume, the government did not see fit to proceed with the recommendation. I still think, however, that the government would be fully justified in proceeding on that recommendation, because it would certainly improve the hours of sitting. I think everybody would feel in a better mood as a result of having the sittings adjourned at ten o'clock instead of eleven o'clock. It would also help to expedite the business of the house because, if that recommendation had carried, we would have seven and a half speeches a week more than we now have under the present sittings; that is, if everybody used his full time, we would have forty-eight speeches a week whereas at the present time we have only forty and a half. Not only would it improve the general sittings of the house and meet

the favour of all members in that regard, but it would actually increase the amount of business that could be handled by the sittings.

I now want to deal specifically with the proposals contained in this resolution. I think the hon. member for Halton did a service to the house in bringing this question before it. I do not agree with the resolution but at least it can be said that we are having an interesting discussion on this question. In so far as we in this group are concerned, I may say that we can support only the last paragraph, namely paragraph (e), which provides that at least four members should rise in their seats to express opposition for a request for unanimous consent to a suspension of the rules.

That is the only section we are prepared to support. The reason we are opposed to the others is that paragraphs (a), (b) and (d) would require the apportioning of time for speaking. I think all members will realize that it would be very difficult to apportion the time on an equitable basis. If there were just two parties in the house it would not be so difficult, but with four parties it would be quite difficult to apportion time on an equitable basis. What would the basis be? The hon. member for Halton suggested that it should be left to the whips to decide, but the whips would have to have some basis on which to work. Would it be on the same basis as that used for setting up committees? Would it be on the same basis as that used for apportioning time over the C.B.C.? We would certainly not agree to that.

The hon. member for Halton suggested that there should be equal time for the opposition and the Liberal members. I would point out that there are a number of reasons why the opposition need and should have more time for speaking than the members of the Liberal party. I think the hon. member for Portage-Neepawa (Mr. Weir) gave one of the best reasons why members of the opposition should have more time to speak than the members of the Liberal party. When the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was speaking, the hon. member for Portage-Neepawa objected to the use of the term "rubber stamp" in regard to Liberal members who did not speak. He said he objected to that term because Liberals did not have to speak as much. He pointed out that they had other opportunities to express their opinions and discuss with the government what should or should not be done. He said that they had other opportunities to ask that certain bills or legislation should be amended.

The opposition does not have the same opportunity and for that reason, if for no