

*Proposal for Time Allocation*

**Mr. Churchill:** Is it not a fact that in 1964 we gave up our summer recess in order to deal with the flag, and if we had not been on that we would have been away and not much other legislation would have gone through?

**Mr. Knowles:** Even having given up the summer recess and staying here, I would point out that the session started in the early part of 1964, in January or February, and did not end until the end of March or the beginning of April, 1965, so that in addition to giving up the summer recess we stretched the session to 248 sitting days. I suggest that is a perfect example of what a lengthy debate does by way of closing out debate on other important issues.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, we are going to solve this issue, but not just with respect to the matter now before us. The issue before us today is far more important than just the question of whether or not the final vote will be taken next Tuesday night on the defence bill. I think the question really before us is this: have we the wit to plan the rules and procedures of the house so that we will be able within 12 months to do the tremendous amount of business that is facing this country every year?

I see my time is running out, Mr. Speaker, not 40 minutes but because the vote on this motion must be taken at a quarter to ten. However, I would like to say just a word to the effect that the rule we are now operating under certainly needs to be improved. It is not the kind of allocation of time rule some of us produced in a committee a couple of years ago. It is one the government brought in instead, but even though this is not the best kind of allocation of time rule it is a great deal better than the old closure rule, No. 33, which I hope will yet be taken out of our standing orders. Indeed, I am as opposed to it now as I was in 1956 and in 1964. But may I remind hon. members that closure rule No. 33 is unilateral in its practice, whereas under provisional standing order 15A there is consultation between the government on one side and representatives of the opposition parties on the other.

• (9:40 p.m.)

The old closure rule, No. 33, when it came into effect was immediate. There was a vote at the start of the day and the debate was concluded that night. Those of us who experienced it in 1956 and again in 1964 know what it is all about. That rule allowed no room for negotiation as to the amount of time

which might be allowed. Rule 15A, even with its imperfections, does provide for consultation and negotiation in respect of the time allowed. I suggest therefore that to try to compare the situation now with the situation of 1956 is a little bit far-fetched.

Some people suggest that what is being done now is the same thing, but one cannot make something the same as something else merely by making the assertion. The plain fact of the matter is that we had practically no discussion in committee of the whole on the pipe line bill in 1956, whereas we have already had 13 days and will have two more, a total of 15, in the committee of the whole on this bill.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is the answer to those who attempt to say that the application of this provisional standing order is the same as closure. Fifteen days of discussion is not the same as practically no discussion at all. Even when this rule was invoked last Thursday it provided, by the time element built into it, a number of days for further discussion. That was not at all possible under the old closure rule used in 1956.

May I say that I hope this house will approve of this motion tonight, to set the reasonable time limits proposed with respect to the further debate of this bill. I hope once we have done that we will all realize that the walls of parliament have not crumbled, that we have not limited free speech or ended democracy by adopting a limit of 15 days debate in the committee of the whole.

It is my hope that the matter will not end here, but that we will go on to improve provisional order 15A, or whatever number we may finally call it; because if we are going to cope with the problems that now face us we must adopt some allocation of time proposal that will really work, and will be fair to all concerned. One of the ways to make this work is to adopt a rule package which relates to the whole parliamentary year. It is not good enough to go on for eight or 12 months muddling through the business of the house in the way we have done and then invoke this rule to cope with a crisis. There should be a co-operative arrangement between the government and the opposition from the beginning of a session. The whole session should be planned in its entirety so that arrangements can be agreed upon as to limitation of time for individual debates.

Because this provisional rule has been invoked I will not complain if Your Honour