

*Motion for Concurrence in Report*

of timing is confronting the house. If the opposition wishes to be responsible about the legislative work, they will have to sit down with us and participate in some of the hard choices involved in deciding how each item will be dealt with and over what period.

While his leader yields to the temptation to mock references to the British experience, I notice that the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) is ready to refer to that experience and particularly to the institution of "usual channels". He is perfectly correct in doing so. It is true that in the British house a great deal of consultation takes place through usual channels and that the rule of convention is that the second reading debate on a bill almost never takes more than one sitting day. I regret, as he does, that we have not built up a body of custom and co-operation of this kind.

But the hon. member for Peace River did not explain to us that since 1881, despite this body of custom and co-operation, the British house has used government timetables for passing bills. In referring to government timetables I might remind members of the house that this, of course, is not closure. The closure rule has also been used at Westminster and, I think, often dozens of times in a single session. Government timetables for passing bills have been used for almost 100 years. For example, from 1900 to 1913 it was used for 25 bills. From 1919 to 1932 it was used for 12 bills. From 1945 to 1967 it was used for 19 bills. Indeed, the British select committee on procedure in 1967, after discussing voluntary or co-operative arrangements, reported to the house that:

Until there is greater experience in the making of voluntary agreements, your committee consider that governments should continue to rely on the traditional form of guillotine when there has been no agreement reached.

That is from the report of July 4, 1967, page x. Obviously in the House of Commons at Westminster they are not entirely happy with the government timetable procedure. The procedure has at least two obvious defects. We tried to overcome these in the proposed standing order 16A. The first criticism is that the debate on the government motion to adopt a timetable on a controversial bill lasts for a sitting day and the debate is regarded by many members as boring and repetitious. In 1967 they cut the debate to two hours. The second criticism is that there is no formalized consultation with opposition spokesmen before the government timetable is submitted to the house.

Under the proposed standing order 16A the government would not be able to put forward a timetable motion until the proceedings committee had met. This at the very least would permit the spokesmen of opposition parties to make their views fully known before the government made a proposal to the house. If opposition spokesmen are really worried that clandestine meetings would take place, a gilt-edged notice requirement can be provided. No one on this side was so machiavellian as to think that it would be good politics to hold clandestine one man meetings of a four party committee.

● (3:20 p.m.)

A good deal has been said about the quorum. I appreciate hon. gentlemen raising the question, and I think it is a fair question to raise. It should be perfectly obvious that parties would be tempted to emasculate standing order 16A by simply staying away from the meetings. We all know what happened to a previous standing order of this house, standing order 15A, because a Conservative representative decided to boycott the meetings. The proposed standing order 16A therefore provides a disincentive to the boycotting of a committee of this house.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Oh, come on!

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) can make a speech on this matter if he wishes. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre criticized the requirement for unanimity in this committee. He would prefer to have the committee decide by a majority. He even invoked the British North America Act, section 49, as authority for that proposition. We all know that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is a great author of red herrings on various procedural subjects in the house. But surely last night we observed the very best of his performances in this regard when we were privileged to see a veritable whale of a red herring.

Let us remember that the proposed committee would not be a committee of the members of this house. It would not reflect the strength of the parties. It would be a committee of the parties, with each party, the smallest like the largest, represented by one member. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would put the government in the position where it could not propose a timetable to the house unless it carried a