

Standing Orders

have two or three members who are studying the matter mentioned in a certain bill, and they would be the only ones that would speak on it. It would be quite easy to know in advance how many speakers there would be on each subject, and then you could allocate a certain time for the debate. If we adopted that method, it would be one of the finest ways of modernizing the procedure in this house.

It is true that some members of parliament believe it is necessary for them to speak, otherwise some of them will not be here after the next general election. They are afraid their opponents will say, "We have paid you \$10,000 for one year and you never made one speech". So far as I am concerned, if I look after my departmental work, if I am active in my committee work, if I look after my correspondence carefully, if I receive my constituents as visitors in my home—I never keep any office hours—I need never worry about the next election, even if I did not make a speech here. After all, there are several other ways for members of parliament to utilize their knowledge, their activities. There are committees of this house in which members could spend a lot of time, and their time would be usefully employed. I do not say this in a critical way, but I notice that some members who are great debaters on the floor of the house are often not very active committee men. In my opinion that is a sad thing because those men, with their fine analytical minds and with their knowledge of certain aspects of our Canadian life, could do a marvellous job in committees, although they would not get the same publicity there that one gets on the floor of the house. Speaking personally, I spend at least four or five hours every week in government departments working for my constituents, and that takes up quite a bit of time and activities. I do not believe members of parliament need to worry if they do not make speeches in the House of Commons because their constituents would be quite satisfied if they realized their representative was being a true servant of the people.

I thank the house for the kind attention it has given to me, and I wish to compliment again the hon. member for Halton for his fine presentation. The discussion has been good. It has been an illuminating discussion because many angles have been brought forward, which have not been brought forward heretofore in the House of Commons and all speakers expressed themselves forcibly. All through the thread of the discussion you could readily see the demand, the inner

demand, of every member of this house to see the rules of parliament revised and modernized.

Even during this debate, and in previous debates, owing to the heavy national majority that the government has, there was talk of steam rolling and so on, which statements are simply ridiculous. Well, I must make this statement. Perhaps the time is not over-ripe to amend our rules of procedure, but the time may come before very long that we may have to do it. Public opinion will request it because, although this is not a business organization or institution, we must to some extent modernize every aspect of our parliamentary system realizing the new situations and conditions that we have to face so that every member of parliament will be given an opportunity to take part in the activities and thereby conduce to shorter sessions. If we do that I believe that we shall be accomplishing great and needed work. I repeat, the time may come, even if the house is not unanimous in the reform and in the amendments to the rules of the house, when the majority in the house may have to have its voice heard on that score and have these changes passed by the majority.

Last year we put into practice some new experiments in the rules committee under your fine leadership, Mr. Speaker. We came to a unanimous decision only on the hours of sitting. When we came to the shortening of the time of the speeches we did not have a unanimous decision. We cannot have one without the other. In this matter, as in all others, it is a matter of compromise, of give and take. I make this appeal to every member of this house. Forgetting party lines, forgetting party affiliation, let us put our minds together and modernize our parliamentary rules so that those who come after us will be very thankful indeed for what we have done, which will mean not only a lot to our parliamentary system but also to the whole of the Canadian nation.

Mr. H. P. Cavers (Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, before coming to this House of Commons I had formed the opinion that the debates that took place in this house were fixed and set by a direct set of rules. Since being in the house I have not become an authority on those rules, but I did not need to be an authority to find that the state of perfection which I had thought existed in this house does not exist at the present time, and that the rules are greatly in need of amendment, and that it is time that we brought the rules more in line with the present-day needs, as set out in the resolution presented by the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Cleaver).