

*Standing Orders*

parliamentary efficiency thus becomes limiting the speeches, especially in debate on the throne speech and on the budget.

The gentlemen who made these findings were quite distinguished, some of them being experienced in legislative assemblies, but others were not. I do not propose to read out their names, but by occupation two of them were university people; four were editors; two were members of provincial legislatures and two were senators. I do not know whether or not that is effrontery on their part. Six of them were businessmen. However, they were expressing a general opinion with regard to parliament.

It has been suggested here that debates be limited to thirty minutes, and consequently the sessions would be reduced and everybody would be happy. I looked into this last fall to see just how much there was in that idea. I recalled that at one time debates were unlimited in the House of Commons, and that in 1927 the forty-minute rule was established. Therefore I looked back at the Journals of the House of Commons from 1900 to 1950 just to see what the situation was. I assumed that from 1900 to 1927—that is a period of 28 years—when unlimited time was allowed members in the House of Commons, the sessions must have been very long, and that after the forty-minute rule was introduced in 1927 the sessions must have been appreciably shorter. I found that the average for the 28 years before the forty-minute rule came into effect was 143 days, and the average for the 23 years after the forty-minute rule came into effect was 146 days. I suggest that reducing the speeches from the unlimited time to forty minutes was not the answer necessarily to the problem of the length of the sessions of parliament. On the basis of that examination, I fail to see how a reduction from forty minutes to thirty minutes would solve the problem that we are attempting to deal with here. If from unlimited time to forty minutes did not reduce the sessions, from forty minutes to thirty minutes is not going to do it either.

My observation, in the time that I have been here, shows that many speeches in this house do not run for the forty minutes. Some do, but not all run for the forty minutes. There are quite a number of speeches of ten minutes, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes and twenty-five minutes, and it balances out. Therefore I think the forty-minute rule is still a sound guide. In any case, I have been making an attempt to restrict my speeches to thirty minutes or under. I am afraid I am going to fail tonight, but I should like to have the right to speak for forty minutes, and by self-discipline try to restrict myself to

twenty minutes, twenty-five minutes or thirty minutes, but I would still like to retain the right to speak for forty minutes. I do not think it should be taken away from anyone. If a minister of the crown can speak for an hour, an hour and a half, or two hours, surely a back bencher should be permitted to speak for forty minutes to explain to the minister how wrong he is.

We talk about the length of the sessions. As to the two sessions of 1951, I am not sure whether they established a record for Canada, but when I was looking through the *Journals* of the house I discovered that certainly up until 1951 the record for the length of a session was set in 1904. In that year they met on March 12, and adjourned on October 24. They had off only Good Friday, Easter Monday, May 24 and July 1, and two or three scattered days like that. There was no long Easter adjournment. They sat for seven and a half months, dealing with quite a number of very important problems, a great deal of railway legislation, immigration and I think redistribution. In that year they discussed the problems that we are discussing now. Almost fifty years ago, and at the end of a very weary seven and a half months' session, they spent a few minutes lamenting the fact that they had been away from home so long, and so on, and they made some suggestions as to what should be done in the future. A Mr. Boyd deplored the length of speeches. He suggested more preparation between sessions and condensation of speeches to fifteen minutes or twenty minutes. He referred to Cromwell's action in removing the mace and locking up the House of Commons, and estimated that no harm would result if the same thing were done in Canada.

A Mr. Robinson urged earlier commencement of the session and suggested that they should start say in January rather than in March. He pointed out the serious effect on a farmer who, in the year 1904, had to miss the spring sowing and the harvest. A Mr. McCreary thought that better preparation on the part of the government would help out, with the help of their office staff, and suggested that they start in December, adjourn for two weeks at Christmas, and then continue in January and attempt to finish in April. Mr. Borden, later Sir Robert Borden, suggested that the government should bring down its business earlier, and then the government spokesman—and we can all pretty well guess what he would say—who was the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Mr. Cartwright, made the suggestion that there should be shorter speeches and no *Hansard*.