

*House of Commons Procedures*

day, unless it is disposed of earlier. Under any other circumstances, a total of five hours shall be deemed to be the equivalent of one sitting day.

(8) During debate on any item of business or stage thereof for which an allocation of time has been made under this Standing Order, if an amendment is proposed which in the opinion of Mr. Speaker materially changes the item of business or stage thereof and which raises any issue for which in the opinion of Mr. Speaker there has not been or otherwise will not be an adequate opportunity for discussion, Mr. Speaker may announce an extension of not more than two days to the allocated period of time.

(9) The term "allocation of time", wherever used in this Standing Order, may include the allotting of time to any item of business, to any stage thereof, or to any part thereof, and may include the fixing of limits for the length of speeches.

3. That the orders of this House under numbered paragraph 1, the changes in Standing Orders consequential upon these Orders, and the new Standing Order 15A be continued in effect until the end of the next ensuing session, unless this House otherwise orders.

**Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur):** Mr. Speaker, before I touch on the resolution I cannot help but thank the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) for his notice of my activities. I must suggest to him that he probably has been much too assiduous in following what I write if he assumes it appears every day. I might mention to him that that great parliamentarian, the greatest of the great to whom he referred and who is immortal to everyone, can be remembered for the fact that throughout his longest of all parliamentary careers he acted both as a lecturer and a journalist, almost as a steady vocation particularly in his early years, and I know he will appreciate it if I take such a gentleman as Mr. Churchill as my model.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Fisher:** I should now like to remark on a couple of the points made by the Conservative and Liberal backbenchers, particularly one point that interests me which was made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent) because it tied in with the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Broadview (Mr. Hahn), the hon. Member for St. Paul's (Mr. Wahn) and the hon. Member for Northumberland (Miss Jewett). It relates to what will happen to the role of the backbencher under the new rules, and particularly the backbench Member on the Government side.

My hon. friend from Carleton yesterday made a speech in which he set out an equality,

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten).]

which he insisted was intrinsic in our institution, with regard to a Government Member having the same right to ask questions as an Opposition Member; in other words, whether we are on one side or the other and no matter to what party we belong, we are all peers.

I grant this is the ideal but we also have to face a parliamentary tradition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona pointed out that during a previous Parliament the hon. Member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) was given to twitting the Government of the day any time more than one or two Government backbenchers got up to speak on a piece of legislation after it had been introduced by a Minister. I am not being critical of him for doing the twitting but we have here in prospect, as put by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, a different concept advocated by Government backbenchers.

They seem to assume that out of these new rules will come a situation whereby time will be equally divided between the Government and the Opposition Members. You cannot speak with any finality or really draw up any rules that are going to apply here, but I put this to the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) who is sitting across the aisle. Suppose he brings in something like the Labour Code. Whether a time limit has been set on the debate or otherwise, are we to suppose that under these new rules 50 per cent of the speaking opportunities are going to be taken up by Government Members who support the legislation and the Minister? If, in the ideal situation, Government Members were going to be critical of the measure or were going to suggest improvements and even move amendments, this would be fine.

But the way I have outlined the possibility I think you can see that there has been a tradition here related to the caucus structure and Parliamentary and party loyalties whereby it is usually acknowledged and taken almost as a right—I almost assume it is a right—that where legislation is concerned a Minister brings in a bill. As the debate develops he may have support on it, but the main role in Parliament is taken by the Opposition in presenting criticisms, suggestions and amendments.

I think we would feel the Parliamentary system in Canada had gone completely haywire if we had a situation like that of last year's flag debate in which the hon. Member for York-Humber (Mr. Cowan), supported, say, by the hon. Member for Brant-Haldi-