

Proposed Changes in Procedure

• (2:40 p.m.)

In other words, it was clear in the early days that these were matters that had to be dealt with as being of substance and importance; that the house had to have an opportunity to deal with the rules individually in committee as well as to pass on them in the house itself.

The next major overhaul came in 1906. Again, if one refers to *Hansard* of July 9 of that year, page 7459, he will find that Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier moved the motion to refer to the committee of the whole house the report of a special committee on procedure which had been presented earlier. The same thing happened in 1910 when there was another major overhaul. The motion was made on April 29 of that year, as recorded at page 8336 of *Hansard*. Again it was Sir Wilfrid Laurier who made the motion to refer the committee's report to the committee of the whole house.

The next occasion when there was a major change in the rules of the house was in 1913. I will come back to it later, rather than dealing with it at this point, because it presents a very interesting exception to the rule. After that the next occasion was 1927. On March 18 of that year, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 1337, Mr. Lapointe moved that the report of the committee that had been tabled be referred to the committee of the whole house.

The next occasion was 1944. On March 7 of that year Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King moved that the committee's report which had been tabled be referred to the committee of the whole house. That was the first occasion upon which I participated in a debate on procedure. I remember it very well. It did not get very far; certain members were against it, it bogged down in committee of the whole, and that committee's report was never adopted.

The next occasion was 1955, when we had a very thorough study under the direction of Hon. Walter Harris. The report of the committee was presented and on June 14, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 4751, Mr. Harris moved that the matter be dealt with in the committee of the whole house, and this was done commencing July 1 of that year. The next major overhaul came in 1965. On that occasion Mr. Pearson on June 8, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 2129, moved that the matter be dealt with in the committee of the whole house.

So our practice over the years is clear. Changing our rules is not something we do by

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

a sudden death motion with Mr. Speaker in the chair, which gives us no opportunity to deal with the rules seriatim. It has almost always been done by referring committee reports to the committee of the whole house.

There are some exceptions to this practice, and I draw attention to them quite frankly. These exceptions do not alter the general rule. For example, there have been a number of occasions when committee reports proposed temporary changes. I had the privilege of moving some of them myself. They were moved with Mr. Speaker in the chair. There were a few occasions when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was prime minister, when the same thing was done when some temporary rules were put in for one year, then another year and continued. There was no objection to its being done that way, so it was done on that occasion by adopting a report with Mr. Speaker in the chair.

I submit that in all these instances there was general consent to its being done in that way and they do not invalidate the established practice that whenever there is a major overhaul the committee's report is referred to the committee of the whole house.

The only exception to this rule so far as any substantial change is concerned was in the year 1913. I hope my hon. friends to the right will not take umbrage if I again express some criticism of the Tories of that day. The Tories of today are a little different; they are now Progressive Conservatives.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On that occasion back in 1913, Sir Robert Borden was prime minister. As all students of history know, parliament was engaged in the naval aid bill debate, which went on and on and on. In due course the government of the day stopped the debate right in the middle of it and brought in a motion to amend the rules. One of the changes proposed in that motion was the introduction of the infamous closure rule, which we now have as standing order 33. The matter was not referred to a committee of the whole house; it was done on a government motion with Mr. Speaker in the chair. But I hope no Liberal will cite that precedent. If he should, I would ask him to read the oratory of Sir Wilfrid Laurier who then sat on the opposition side of the house and condemned the whole practice out of hand. One of the things Sir Wilfrid Laurier complained about was the very fact that the