

*Procedure and Organization*

well recognized, I hope that this law, which is similar, will also soon be recognized.

There are plenty of examples I can call upon to show this law is true. For several years during my earlier period in the house there was no time limit on any debate except debate on private members' business. The throne speech debate could go on for weeks if members wanted to prolong it to that extent, and sometimes they did. Similarly the budget debate was unrestricted.

But in actual practice, if you look back over the record, Mr. Speaker, though debates were sometimes long they were also often quite short. On one or two occasions we dispensed with one or two days on the throne speech debate. Since time limits have been imposed on the throne speech debate and the budget debate, practically always the time is fully taken up. There are only two instances that I can remember when the time allotted to those two debates was not consumed. In other words, if time is allotted to a debate, there is a natural tendency to expand the debate in order to use up the time.

It is often argued that in past years there was not nearly as much business to deal with as there is today, and therefore in former days you could take time to have long debates on the throne speech, the budget, or anything else. It is claimed this cannot be done today because there is too much business to get through. The answer that I point to the first post-war session held in 1946. More measures were passed and business completed in that session than in any other session during the 24 or 25 years I have been here. Nevertheless there were no time limits on any of the debates. I think it was some time in February when the session started and it finished about the end of August. Considerably longer sessions than that have been normal in recent years since time limits came in with regard to debates.

• (3:30 p.m.)

The greatest example of the point I am trying to make is that if you put a limit on a debate it is going to expand it. There will not be any time saved at all. It is instructive to look at the question period before any time limit was laid down for it. I took a bound volume of *Hansard* at random off my shelves and looked to see what the question period amounted to in those years. I picked up volume V for the 1953-54 session.

Looking at the first day which is covered in this volume, Friday, May 7, 1954, we see that there were three questions asked that day.

The questions and the answers take up one page in *Hansard*. The next sitting day, which would be Monday, May 10, four questions were asked. One page of *Hansard* was taken up with regard to the matter. The record continues: Tuesday, May 11, three questions, one and three-quarters pages of *Hansard*; May 12, seven questions, three and one-quarter pages of *Hansard*; May 13, three questions, three-quarters of a page of *Hansard*; Friday, May 14, four questions, one page of *Hansard*; May 17, two questions, half a page of *Hansard*; May 20, seven questions, three and one-half pages. This was typical of the situation with regard to questions and the amount of time taken up with questions for years and years in this house.

It was normal for the question period to take up five to ten minutes and very frequently only one, two or three minutes. One of the reasons for that was that the rules with regard to oral questions were enforced. A question had to be short and of importance. In my opinion the majority of the questions asked today would have been ruled out of order in that period. This, of course, kept the length of the question period shorter.

But when a specific time limit was put on the question period, allotting 40 minutes a day, what happened? Immediately the question period expanded so that it took up the whole 40 minutes. Last Friday is a good example. There were at least two or three dozen questions asked. The question period lasted the full 40 minutes. Possibly Your Honour was a little lenient and it even went beyond that. The questions and answers occupy ten and a half pages of *Hansard*.

When you start putting limits on debates and question periods, instead of saving time you do the opposite. You prolong debate. This is the point I am trying to make. If rule 75c were used to any extent, it would not save the time of the house. It would have the opposite effect. More time would be taken up in the house to debate the same matters. Every time an allocation of time would be made under this rule, undoubtedly the full time would be taken up. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the basic argument which the government puts forward that this rule is necessary to save time is a fallacy. It is based on a lack of study of what happened in the past, particularly the history of the question period, to see what the situation has been with regard to the throne speech and the budget debate which now have time allocations.

As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said in his speech last week, the real