

*Standing Orders*

evident bundle of notes like a pack of cards. Sometimes, as each little page is done with, he puts it down on the bench beside him. Sometimes they are turned over like the pages of an almanac.

I believe that would indicate that they have the same trouble there that we have here. He instances, too, the difficulties facing a member of the house who finds himself without an audience. You might be interested in the following, speaking about a backbencher:

The backbencher must be in his place when the debate on the bill begins: but there is small chance of his going into action for two or three hours. The minister, whose opening is delayed, perhaps, till three forty-five, takes a leisurely forty minutes and the front-bencher on the other side is nearly as long. When he sits down it is five o'clock and most of the house goes out to tea, which is always hard on the Liberal spokesman, who is next. Your member, Mr. Smith, wishes very much that he could go out with the other happy members and have a cup of tea. But that would endanger his chance of being "called" by the Speaker, so he must sit and listen to this dreary Liberal (all other speakers are dreary when you are waiting to speak yourself).

I suggest that conditions in England are not so different from conditions here. I should like to deal with what the hon. member said about the allocation of time orders. Again he drew his example from England, and again I should like to quote from Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, chapter 19, which mentions methods of curtailing debate, on page 454. It reads:

The principal methods available for the curtailment of debate on particular items of business in the House of Commons are the following:

1. The closure of debate (of which there are two principal forms) (i) the ordinary closure; (ii) closure on the words of a clause.
2. The selection of amendments.
3. The allocation by orders of limits of time for discussion.

Further on he says:

They are probably a permanent feature of modern procedure, but they are still felt to be an unfortunate necessity and not to be justified except against obstruction or by pressure of business. This is especially true of the first and third of these methods—

That is closure and allocation time orders.—the employment of which has become decreasingly frequent in the last twenty years.

I believe the important problem that faces us in this resolution is the desire to impose a restriction on the rights and privileges of private members of the house. I would point out that there is no restriction on cabinet ministers, who may speak at great length on almost any occasion. In December the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) filled eighteen and a half pages of *Hansard*, while the other day the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) filled ten pages of *Hansard*, consuming an hour and a half. His counterpart in England took one hour of time in a similar debate.

[Mr. Churchill.]

I noticed, too, on looking through *Beauchesne*, which someone wants to destroy but which I think should be saved, that in 1943 on a non-confidence motion on defence preparedness the Speaker ruled that four ministers, who had in some way or another an interest in the matter of defence, had the privilege of speaking for an unlimited time. If that ruling should be invoked again it would place unusual powers in the hands of the ministers who are already powerful enough in so far as the rights of private members are concerned.

The proposal we have before us is part of the process of erosion of the functions of parliament. We are talking about reducing the time of the session, shortening debates, restricting the length of speeches and things of that nature. I believe that that is due to a misconception of the functions of parliament. Parliament is not an administrative body, it is what is known as a talking shop, a place for debate. We look to the cabinet and the civil servants to carry out the administration. Parliament's job is to examine government policy, legislation and expenditures, and to call for the redress of grievances before the granting of supply. There is no other way to do these things except to talk. I believe every member admitted to the house should have the same right to express himself as any other member, irrespective of his position in the house. He may have something to contribute to the debate which has not been thought of by others. Time and again I have heard it mentioned, although I have not been here so long, that the subject matter under discussion has been fully debated; everything has been said, so let us have a vote on it. It does not necessarily follow that everything has been said. Someone else may rise and throw some light upon the subject; consequently I am against any restriction of the debates in the House of Commons.

The length of speeches has been discussed many times, and it is not a new topic. It is mentioned in every parliament and I suppose in every legislature. It is often a topic of conversation for the general public. My interest in this matter was aroused last October when I found in the *Financial Post* of October 20, 1951, a headline which read, "How improve parliament's efficiency." The question which was submitted to a number of gentlemen across the country was, "What are your suggestions for improving the efficiency of parliament?" Summarizing their suggestions, it came to this: Members talk too much and too often. The most frequently voiced suggestion for improving