

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

TIME-LIMIT FOR SPEECHES

Mr. Speaker: Before I proceed with the further consideration of the motion moved yesterday for reference to the Joint Committee of the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Bill by the hon. Law Minister, and before I call upon Shri D. C. Sharma, who was in possession of the House yesterday when the House adjourned, I should just invite the attention of the House to one aspect while we are proceeding with legislation, according to the programme set out by the Business Advisory Committee. A number of Members have written to me in that respect, and I think there is force in what they say. Their complaint is that when time is allotted as a whole to a particular Bill, unless time is allotted to individual speakers, the allotment works to the disadvantage of those who are not fortunate enough to catch the eye of the Speaker in the beginning. That is the complaint which has come to me, and I have said there is force in that complaint. The speakers get ample time at the start, for example, one hour or one and a half hours or so.

Some Hon. Members: Three hours.

Mr. Speaker: That makes the case much stronger. At the fag end, we have to curtail the time-limit to fifteen minutes or so.

Several Hon. Members: Five minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Now, what happens is that while, in the longer speeches few new points are coming up—there is almost a repetition which is difficult for the Chair to check—the Members who come later do not get the opportunity of placing even important points that they may have. I shall, therefore, make a request to the Members, specially in view of the fact that this Bill is going to the Select Committee, that they will be short in their speeches and will try to place only the prominent points which they would like the Select Committee to take into consideration. The result will be, more time will be left for those who want to speak later

on, and there will be no repetitions and unnecessary waste of time of the House. I am not at present imposing any time-limit, but I am only making a request. We have now about nine hours left to us out of the allotment made by the Business Advisory Committee, and we can adjust to the large number of speeches if every speaker bears in mind what I have just represented.

Shri Punnoose (Alleppey): May I make a submission? The Business Advisory Committee makes out a priority list. The Government said that they would adhere to it. But every now and then, almost every day, that list is being upset. That is disadvantageous.

Mr. Speaker: I quite agree. When once a priority list is given, it has to be adhered to. But I would differ from the hon. Member when he says that every day it is being changed. He is rather exaggerating the case. But, at the same time, there are various difficulties also which have to be taken into consideration. The point in sticking to the priority list is mainly to adjust to the timings and also to see that a particular business which Government have placed before the Business Advisory Committee is considered. Under the structure of our Constitution which provides for two Houses, sometimes this programme is upset, because of undue or, rather, I should not say 'undue' but unexpected prolongation of business in the Upper House, and it will not be proper for this House to sit without any business, and therefore, some shifting becomes necessary. That is inevitable. But I think we are just trying out all these things and as we get more and more experience, things will get better adjusted. Let us hope so.

Shri Punnoose: Why not change the constitution?

Mr. Speaker: That is for the hon. Members to decide—change of Constitution.