

tively. Custom has given a force almost equivalent to that of a law to the practice of looking to the leaders to initiate resolutions, motions, etc., relating to the house's general work. By virtue of his position the majority leader puts motions before the house if he is present and in his absence the motion is made by someone representing him. In case the minority is opposed to the majority's action the work of opening and directing the opposition falls on the minority leader.

Custom has decreed that floor leaders of the parties in the house shall agree to measures relating to the conduct of the house, such as an agreement to desist from any important legislation until after the measure pending before it has been acted on, for example, and although there is no rule against such a proceeding, any member who tried to interfere with this work would be regarded by all concerned as an offensive "butter-in."

Business in the house is expedited by the custom of unanimous consent which has come into general use. Instead of stating a proposition in a motion on which the house may be divided, it is the custom to say, "I ask unanimous consent," for whatever it may be desired to have the house act on. The request is repeated by the speaker who asks if anyone objects. In the case of party measures there is usually no objection to a majority request because it will carry anyway if voted on, provided a quorum is present. This of course prevents a waste of time.

The committee plan of the house is another feature that aids materially in economizing time. The house has some 60 different committees, the functions of which are suggested by their names. A bill to be considered is referred to the appropriate committee either by its author or by the speaker. When the committee returns a bill to the house it is handled by the chairman of the committee to which it was referred provided he is in favor of it. In case a minority report is made the opposition is controlled by the ranking member of the committee. His part in the action on the bill is an important one because he is allowed to take the floor for his side and is required to yield it only to such persons as he desires. Thus he controls both the time and character of the debate. By reason of this privilege considerable importance attaches to a chairmanship of a committee and to the position of ranking member of the opposing side.

Members are appointed to committees not so much on account of special abilities as on account of seniority in service. Since all the important work of the house is done by the committees, it is obvious that the state which continues its representatives longest in office will enjoy the maximum of influence in legislation. As a rule the South has never changed its representation so much or so often as the North and West have done; consequently the South is relatively stronger in the