

SEC. XXXI—BILL, SECOND READING IN THE HOUSE

In Parliament, after the bill has been read a second time, if on the motion and question it be not committed, or if no proposition for commitment be made, the speaker reads it by paragraphs, pausing between each, but putting no question but on amendments proposed; but when through the whole, he puts the question whether it shall be read a third time, if it came from the other house, or, if originating with themselves, whether it shall be engrossed and read a third time. The speaker reads sitting, but rises to put questions. The clerk stands while he reads.

§ 428. Manner of reading a bill the second time.

But the Senate of the United States is so much in the habit of making many and material amendments at the third reading that it has become the practice not to engross a bill till it has passed—an irregular and dangerous practice, because in this way the paper which passes the Senate is not that which goes to the other House, and that which goes to the other House as the act of the Senate has never been seen in the Senate. In reducing numerous, difficult, and illegible amendments into the text the Secretary may, with the most innocent intentions, commit errors which can never again be corrected.

In the House the Clerk and not the Speaker or Chairman of the Committee of the Whole reads bills on second reading. After the second reading, which is in full, the bill is open to amendment. Clause 8 of rule XVI, as explained in § 942, *infra*, governs first and second readings of bills in the House and in Committee of the Whole.

The bill being now as perfect as its friends can make it, this is the proper stage for those fundamentally opposed to make their first attack. All attempts at earlier periods are with disjointed efforts, because many who do not expect to be in favor of the bill ultimately, are willing to let it go on to its perfect state, to take time to examine it themselves and to hear what can be said for it, knowing that after all they will have sufficient opportunities of giving it their veto. Its two last stages, therefore, are reserved for this—that is to say, on the question whether it shall be engrossed and read a third time, and, lastly, whether it shall pass. The first of these is usually the most interesting contest, because then the whole subject is new and engaging, and the minds of the Members having not yet been declared by any trying vote the issue is the more doubtful. In this stage, therefore, is the main trial of strength between its friends and opponents, and it behooves everyone to make up his mind decisively for this question, or he loses the main battle; and accident and management may, and often do, prevent a successful rallying on the next and last question, whether it shall pass.

In the House there are two other means of testing strength—one by raising the question of consideration when the bill first comes up (clause 3 of rule XVI), and the other by moving to strike out the enacting words when it is first open to amendment (clause 9 of rule XVIII). By these methods an adverse opinion may be expressed without permitting the bill to consume the time of the House.

§ 429. Test of strength on engrossment after amendment.

§ 430. Test of strength on a bill before amending.

§ 431. Endorsement of the title on an engrossed bill.

When the bill is engrossed the title is to be indorsed on the back, and not within the bill. *Hakew, 250.*

In the practice of the House and the Senate the title appears in its proper place in the engrossed bill, and also is endorsed, with the number, on the back.

SEC. XXXII—READING PAPERS

§ 432. Parliamentary law as to the reading of papers.

Where papers are laid before the House or referred to a committee every Member has a right to have them once read at the table before he can be compelled to vote on them; but it is a great though common error to suppose that he has a right, *toties quoties*, to have acts, journals, accounts, or papers on the table read independently of the will of the House. The delay and interruption which this might be made to produce evince the impossibility of the existence of such a right. There is, indeed, so manifest a propriety of permitting every Member to have as much information as possible on every question on which he is to vote, that when he desires the reading, if it be seen that it is really for information and not for delay, the Speaker directs it to be read without putting a question, if no one objects; but if objected to, a question must be put. *2 Hats., 117, 118.*

At one time, the House, by former rule XXX, had a provision regarding the reading a paper other than that on which the House is called to give a final vote.