

SPEAKERS ALSO HAVE TO EAT!

*THE SPEAKER'S CHOP. The term applied to an unofficial adjournment of the House which was instituted in the 19th century to enable the Speaker to have his dinner. Nowadays the Speaker can be relieved by a deputy at any time without the specific leave of the House and there has ceased to be any necessity for such an institution.

According to Sir Henry Lucy, a member who was mentally deranged once went behind the Chair and 'tried to eat the Speaker's chop'!

The "Speaker's chop" was reinstated for a short period in 1924 as the result of a difficult constitutional situation which arose after the General Election of December 1923. Although the Conservative Party had been defeated in the election by the combined strength of the Liberal and Labour parties, it still remained the largest single group represented in the House of Commons. The Premier Minister, Stanley Baldwin, therefore decided to remain in office until such time as his Government sustained a defeat in the House of Commons. When Parliament met Baldwin proposed the re-election of the Chairman, but the leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay Macdonald, warned him that under the circumstances the appointments would not be allowed to pass without a division. The matter was therefore left in abeyance, and there being no Deputy Speaker to relieve the Speaker, the House reverted temporarily to the practice of allowing a break in the proceedings to afford the Speaker an opportunity to partake of refreshment.

*"An Encyclopaedia of Parliament" by Norman Wilding and Philip Laundry (Cassell, London, Fourth (revised) edition, 1972)