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LETTERS

Lok Sabha Speeches

Sir,—The new Lok Sabha has got into its stride with many new members having made their maiden speeches and shown their debating skill. But one unhappy tendency seems to creep in more and more into the deliberations of the House: it is to read out written speeches, a practice which rules and conventions of the Indian Parliament and the British House of Commons prohibit.

The very essence of the parliamentary way is to settle matters through discussion and debate. The cut and thrust of debate can only come, as May's Parliamentary Practice says, when members make "bonafide unwritten compositions" keeping in view the arguments and speeches of other members.

If new members read their speeches, one can understand it. But when even some seasoned Parliamentarians with ten years' standing read written speeches, it does not augur well for parliamentary traditions. Even the Prime Minister had to ridicule what he called the "manuscript eloquence" of Mr J. B. Kripalani in the last Lok Sabha.

Although there is a rule which says that "except with the leave of the Chair, previously obtained, no member should read out a written speech, though notes may be referred to," the Chair does not as a rule intervene unless appealed to. May in his Parliamentary Practice says that the "Chair as a rule passes off the matter with the remark that the notes used by the hon'ble member appear to be unusually full or the hon'ble member has provided himself with rather copious notes."

It is now for the members themselves to refrain voluntarily from the temptation of taking to manuscript eloquence which, as May has pointed out, can have no relation to arguments of earlier speeches.—Yours, etc.,

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