

SEC. XXXII—READING 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.*

Until the 103d Congress 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 (see §§ 964, 965, *infra*).

It is equally an error to suppose that any Member has a right, without a question put, to lay a book or paper on the table, and have it read, on suggesting that it contains matter infringing on the privileges of the House. *Ib.*

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

§ 433. Papers not necessarily to be read on plea of privilege.

For the same reason a Member has not a right to read a paper in his place, if it be objected to, without leave of the House. But this rigor is never exercised but where there is an intentional or gross abuse of the time and patience of the House.

§ 434. Member not always privileged to read a paper in his place.

A Member has not a right even to read his own speech, committed to writing, without leave. This also is to prevent an abuse of time, and therefore is not refused but where that is intended. *2 Grey, 227.*

A report of a committee of the Senate on a bill from the House of Representatives being under consideration: on motion that the report of the committee of the House of Representatives on the same bill be read in the Senate, it passed in the negative. *Feb. 28, 1793.*

§ 435. Reports of committees not read except on order or in debate.

In the House ordinary reports are read only in time of debate (V, 5292), and subject to the authority of the House (V, 5293). But in a few cases, where a report does not accompany a bill or other proposition of action, but presents facts and conclusions, it is read to the House if acted on (II, 1364; IV, 4663).

Formerly, when papers were referred to a committee, they used to be first read; but of late only the titles, unless a Member insists they shall be read, and then nobody can oppose it. *2 Hats., 117.*

§ 436. Reading of papers on reference.

Under the rules, petitions, memorials, and communications are referred through the Clerk's desk, so that there is no opportunity for reading before reference, though messages from the President are read (clauses 1 and 3 of rule XII; clause 2 of rule XIV).