

discussion on the first clause of a bill is of the utmost importance to those of us who happen to be in opposition, and after the next election it will be just as important to my friends who now sit on the government benches.

Mr. CHEVRIER: You will have to change your tactics to change places.

Mr. GREEN: I suggest that hon. gentlemen opposite be not too insistent in asking for such a harsh interpretation of the rule. I was here during all the war years and before that, as most other members were, and I have never heard that this right extended only to war appropriation acts, or to the first item in the estimates of a department. I urge upon you, Mr. Chairman, that you do not make a far-reaching ruling of that type without having given it the most careful consideration after hearing submissions from various sides of the house. Certainly, as the hon. member for Stanstead has said, it would be unfortunate if at this late date in the session a harsh ruling of the type requested by the Minister of Veterans Affairs were made.

Mr. MACKENZIE: I object to the word "harsh". I simply wish to see the rules observed. There is nothing harsh about it at all. The rules are fair and equitable.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I think in view of the statement made by the hon. member for Vancouver South, particularly his statement that there seems to be an attempt to curtail discussion. I should say just a word. There has been no attempt to curtail discussion. The facts are to the contrary. There has been ample opportunity to discuss the very matter that hon. members are attempting to discuss today; first of all in the committee of railways and shipping, where the affairs of the Canadian National are brought up, to which committee matters are referred for that very purpose; and now the bill comes to the house consequent upon approval of the C.N.R. budget in committee. Again, there will be more opportunities to discuss this whole matter of railways, first on the estimates of the Minister of Transport, on the general administration item; then on his estimates for railway service and railway matters, and again on another part of his estimates. Are we to have three debates on this question, or one? It makes no difference to me whether we have the debate now or later.

Mr. GREEN: Why not have it now?

Mr. CHEVRIER: I have met this before. There will be the same difficulty when the estimates come up and the whole debate will

[Mr. Green.]

start all over again. It seems to me that we should stick to the ruling, and the ruling has been that in committee of the whole the discussion should have to do with the clause before the committee.

Mr. HACKETT: Mr. Chairman, I have a good deal of commiseration for you. I sometimes lose my way and sometimes my patience, and if I were in your position I would lose my patience more frequently than I do in my own role. But the fact is we want to get on with the business of the house. We want to ask a few questions concerning this matter. I am drawing to your attention an authority which I am sure the right hon. member for Vancouver Centre will not question. It is the authority of my genial friend who sits just behind him, the Minister of Labour, who is an authority on procedure as well as on many other topics.

Mr. MITCHELL: My hon. friend is taking himself too seriously.

Mr. HACKETT: I always take the Minister of Labour very seriously, and I am going to ask you, Mr. Chairman, to follow my good example. This is a matter which came up just a few days ago. An hon. member wanted to discuss, as we are attempting to discuss now, an item on a resolution, and he put forward this argument as reported at page 3894 of *Hansard*. The hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch), who was not being given the latitude that he felt he was entitled to, said:

That may not be true. On the resolution stage you are free to ask any question pertaining to the resolution, but when we are dealing with the bill we are tied down to individual sections and may find it impossible to ask a particular question. We had an example this afternoon when certain questions were asked and hon. members were told that they could not ask them under that particular section. It is quite possible that when the bill comes down there may be certain questions we want to ask that do not apply specifically to any section, and therefore we shall not be able to ask them.

Whereupon the Minister of Labour intervened and said:

You can ask them on the title.

I submit, Mr. Chairman, that we should be afforded the opportunity of asking the few general questions which are of interest to us at this time. It will save time and will be no departure from tradition; it will be merely carrying out the understanding that has existed and been abided by in the house for many moons. I therefore ask you to rule that since the equipment which is referred to in the bill