

Clean Air Act

probably because I disagree with the point of order but that I am quite willing to let the government look after itself. This time, however, I am on my feet because I disagree with this point of order.

Mr. McGrath: You are not infallible.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): No, but I do not raise phony points of order.

Mr. McGrath: I think you have been sucked in. Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East is rising on a question of privilege.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I have not been here as long as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Indeed, I have respect for him and look up to him as an authority on the rules of the House and if you like, with respect Your Honour, as one of the custodians of the rules. I suggest to you, Sir, it is not in keeping with the reputation the hon. member has in this House for him to suggest that my point of order is a phony point of order. It was raised in all sincerity and with honest intentions. I hope the hon. member will not impute these improper motives to me.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): In a spirit of goodwill, Sir, if what I have said carries an implication he does not like, I apologize to my hon. friend because what we have before us is a serious matter which I think should receive serious consideration. In any event, I hope he is satisfied that he got me to my feet in connection with this point of order. I have three things to say.

First, I believe the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) had a valid point when he spoke a moment ago. I do not believe he should have been attacked as he was by the hon. member for St. John's East. It is a fact that on January 26, when a point of order was raised in respect of the omnibus nature of the government organization bill, Your Honour ruled that the time to raise a point such as that was after the bill had been given first reading and had been printed. In other words, that is the time at which to consider whether a bill as a whole is properly before the House. It should be done before the second reading debate commences and not in the middle of it, as is the case now. I believe the hon. member for Comox-Alberni was quite right and I agree with Your Honour's ruling on that point, even though I was not happy that you did not find it possible to divide the omnibus bill.

The second thing I wish to say is that I invite my friends of the official opposition to take note that what they are raising is not a point of order against the bill as a whole but against one subclause of one clause of the bill.

Mr. Peddle: It is the right time to do it, too.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is not the right time to do it. The time to do it is when we are on

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

that subclause which will be when the bill reaches the standing committee to which it is being referred. There are rules about what one can do at the second reading stage. At this stage we deal with a bill as a whole and not the clauses. Unless my hon. friends have a point to the effect that the bill in its entirety is improper, I suggest they do not have a point at all. I urge them to withhold this point of order until the bill reaches the committee and that clause is under consideration.

The third thing I wish to say is in respect of the remarks made by my good friend from Gander-Twillingate about our role as legislators, the passing of bills and so on. May I say to him that we are not passing this bill at this point. We are only debating a motion for second reading and the referral of the bill to committee. If we were at the third reading stage and were passing a bill that had within it a clause which was inconsistent with some other bill that had been passed, their point would be valid and I would be backing it. But that is not the case. We are not passing a bill. We are considering proposed legislation and the likelihood is that there are a number of details in it which members may not like or which they may find offensive. However, for the life of me, I cannot see any point of order in respect of the propriety of the bill as a whole, which is what the hon. member for St. John's East has asked Your Honour to find. I hope my friend is grateful to me for having yielded to his request to take the floor.

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members for their contribution to the important point of order. Indeed, I consider the arguments which have been put forward so interesting, and the point itself of such interest to all hon. members, that I would suggest, if there is value in my suggestion, that we continue the debate which is going on at the present time. Within the next half hour or the next hour, I will have an opportunity, in the peace and quiet of the Speaker's Chambers, to look at the arguments which have been submitted to this House by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) and the very important and relevant comments made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Then, perhaps I can give a ruling which will be a little more thoughtful than if I gave it at this time off the top of my head. I feel the matter is important enough that I should give it a few minutes serious consideration. But I do not think the progress of the discussion should be arrested and I suggest to hon. members that whoever had the floor at the time the point of order was raised might conclude his contribution to the bill in a substantive way.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, we have started the debate on the second reading of Bill C-224, the clean air bill. I listened with a great deal of interest to the minister when he spoke before lunch and outlined the aims and objectives of this new legislation. I should like to thank the minister for his courtesy in sending me a copy of his speech so that we could follow his remarks. I regret I do not have a written copy of my speech in order to return the compliment.