

Water Resources Programs

should frankly admit that I was one of those with whom discussions were held.

It seems to me that there is not a clear case against what my hon. friend, the hon. member for Kootenay West has sought to do. He has sought to file an amendment to the bill, and this he did at the report stage at a time when the report stage had not been completed. Indeed, it was at a time when we had not yet reached amendments to clauses of the bill anywhere near the clause that my hon. friend was seeking to amend.

The appropriate Standing Order under which Your Honour seeks to rule is 75(5), which provides:

If, not later than twenty-four hours prior to the consideration of a report stage, written notice is given of any motion to amend, delete, insert or restore any clause in a bill, it shall be printed on a notice paper.

I realize that if I tried to read the French version, my poor French would show up. But it would also be pointed out to me that where in the English text there is reference to "a report stage", the French text refers to "the report stage". So which came first, the hen or the egg? In which language was the rule first drafted?

I confess that since our discussions I have gone back to such records as there are of the Special Committee on Procedure and Organization, and I have to admit that I cannot find any record of the discussions that took place regarding this point. It is my recollection, however, that in the special committee it was our understanding that even if the report stage had started, if it were possible to get something put in about later clauses of the bill, provided it could still appear on the Order Paper this should be permitted. For example, what happens if, as a result of the passing some of these amendments at the report stage, it becomes clear that other amendments ought to be made later in the bill? I know there is a provision that permits this to be done if these amendments are consequential only and have no substantial effect; but one can imagine situations where there would be a substantial effect.

The particular point that I wish to make is that the rule does not say that these motions have to be in before the report stage starts, and I emphasize "before the report stage starts". The rule simply provides that notice has to be given prior to a report stage. What is a report stage, especially with a bill like this where the report stage has lasted for several days?

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I also point out to Your Honour that the amendment that my colleague sought to move was an amendment which took cognizance of a report made by the committee to which this bill had been referred, that report not having been tabled in the House until after the report stage on this bill had commenced. It seems to me that it is rather unfortunate when the House receives a report from a committee which says that such and such should be done, and there is then no way for the House at the report stage to take cognizance of this. Perhaps this is something that we have to correct, because it is becoming apparent that there are a number of rules which need to be refined a bit; but even as the rule stands, it seems to me that what my colleague has sought to do was appropriate, and that the proposed amendment should have been printed on a notice paper.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre for the views that he has expressed. I fully agree with him that it is obvious the Standing Order is not so clear that it cannot easily be interpreted in more than one way. At the same time, I do not think that I can give it the interpretation suggested by the hon. member at this time.

For example, on May 20, 1970 the House took up consideration of the report stage of Bill C-144, an act to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada, including research and planning and implementation of the programs relating to the conservation, development and utilization of water resources.

On May 26, 1970, after several of the motions standing for consideration at the report stage had been disposed of, the hon. member for Kootenay West, as I have indicated, proposed to file a motion to amend the said bill, and this has given rise to the point of order which I initiated a moment ago. After considering the wording of Section (5) of Standing Order 75, it seemed to me that a motion to amend the bill could not be accepted once consideration of a report stage of a bill had been undertaken. If hon. members will consult the Standing Orders, they will see that Section (5) of Standing Order 75 reads as follows:

- (3:10 p.m.)

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