

Western Grain Transportation Act

meaning of what Madam Speaker indicated earlier. In order to proceed in an orderly fashion, I submit that we proceed with other speakers who may have an important contribution to make. I am willing, as I have been since the beginning of this debate, to listen to something new that Members may want to put forward between now and 11 o'clock this evening.

I submit that we are going nowhere. I prefer, as has been indicated by those who are here, that Members have the opportunity to put forward their views tonight, and at the first opportunity my very good friend for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) could ask the Speaker indirectly in the House or indirectly in other ways the exact meaning of her ruling. She is not in the Chair.

You, Mr. Speaker, are not going to say what exactly she meant to say when she said something earlier on. In conclusion, I submit that we should proceed with the debate and listen to what our colleagues have to say tonight in their contribution to the debate.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, under normal circumstances, that would be a most intelligent suggestion. However, let me just ask this question: Suppose we were to decide that the vote should come now, what then would we do? Would we then proceed on the basis of the apparent ruling by the Speaker that the debate on second reading could be completed in accordance with the existing Standing Order, or would we have the vote? Would we sit and wait? What would we do?

It would be very difficult for us to allow the vote to take place not knowing the consequences of that action that would flow from the ruling of the Speaker, if I may say so. It might be more appropriate in the circumstances if we were to adjourn for an hour until the Speaker could get back from wherever she is and clarify for us exactly what she had in mind. It would be fair to the Government lest they feel they would be cheated out of their motion. It would be fair to the Opposition.

I would ask you, Sir, do you not think that since the actual vote hinges on the Speaker's interpretation of her own ruling and since it is entirely possible that the vote on the motion to have the previous question could well come at any moment, maybe you would take it upon yourself to call a brief adjournment and ask the Speaker if she would mind returning to help us out in this matter?

Mr. McKnight: Mr. Speaker, as a way of attempting to assist the Chair, may I suggest that, rather than an adjourning, so that Members on this side, not the Government side, who wish to speak will not be deprived of speaking time, if the rules of the debate are going to be changed, maybe we could sit here and Government Members could carry on this debate. That would not deny Members on this side the opportunity to speak. Government Members could carry on this debate until there is a ruling. We have heard that there are several Members opposite here who are anxious to speak. We would allow them the opportunity to take part in the debate while we wait for the decision of the Chair as to the meaning of the interpretation.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear what is going on here. The NDP Members are again grasping at any flimsy excuse to try to delay the debate.

• (1920)

I would refer Your Honour to page 79, Citation 239.(2) which states:

Hypothetical queries on procedure cannot be addressed to the Speaker from the floor of the House.

That is what has been happening here, Mr. Speaker. There have been queries directed to you about what would happen in the event that certain events occurred, what would be the application of the Speaker's earlier comments in the event that situation A, B, C or D occurred. That is specifically prohibited by Beauchesne.

You have been quite patient, Mr. Speaker, but I think it would be a travesty of all parliamentary tradition if this were allowed to go on. Surely the debate must continue. The people of Canada are entitled to have the issue discussed. They are entitled to be heard as witnesses in committee once the Bill gets there. Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments and observations to make about the advice given to the Chair by previous speakers in the sense that the interpretation of the provisions and the ruling of the Speaker should be dealt with now. There a number of important issues that would be determined in subsequent debate, and it is my contention that, if in fact the interpretation of the ruling moves a certain way, we would find ourselves in a situation where the possibility of amendment exists. It strikes me that the benefit to Canadians that would flow from some of the motions that would have been put forward in the form of amendments would be extremely useful to the House and the country at large.

It strikes me that this is very clearly a closure or time allocation manoeuvre. Members of the Conservative Party know very well that, as we proceed, this will in fact kill debate and put the Bill to committee following second reading.

In concert with my colleague, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), I would like to indicate to the Chair that it is important that an interpretation of the Speaker's ruling be brought forward so that we can determine what course of action we will follow from here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I will assist the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) and other Hon. Members who are asking for an interpretation. The House will recognize that the weight of judgment should be given to the comments made by Madam Speaker. I find it to be a perfectly clear interpretation of her remarks as recorded by *Hansard* that in the event the previous question is put and the motion is negatived, then debate will continue on the main motion. I find it at the same time consistent, although not necessarily stated in her remarks, that if the previous question is put and carried, then there will be no further debate and there will be a vote taken on the main motion.