

Time Allocation

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSEALLOTMENT OF TIME TO CONSIDER REPORT AND THIRD
READING STAGES OF BILL C-42

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 75C, I move, seconded by the Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen):

That, in relation to Bill C-42, an act to provide a means to conserve the supplies of energy within Canada during periods of national emergency caused by shortages or market disturbances affecting the national security and welfare and the economic stability of Canada, not more than one sitting day shall be allocated, if necessary, to the further consideration of the report stage of the said bill and not more than one sitting day shall be allocated, if necessary, to the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That, not later than 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business in each such sitting, any proceeding before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this order and, in turn, every question then necessary in order to dispose of the report stage or third reading stage, as the case may be, of the said bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Peters: Are we going to trust him with our emergencies?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I feel that I should be rising on a point of stupidity rather than on a point of order, for I have seldom seen such an unwise move on the part of the government so far as the procedures of this House are concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): However, since the motion has been presented seriously by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Gillespie), I feel there is a point of order that must be raised.

Standing Order 75C says, in part:

A minister of the Crown who from his place in the House at a previous sitting has stated that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 75A or 75B in respect of proceedings at the stage at which a public bill was then under consideration—

How in the world can the motion that the minister read out to you be fitted into those terms? The motion is not exactly as it was in the notice he gave yesterday, but I do not quarrel with that; it is along the same lines. The motion is in two parts. It proposes, first of all, a limitation of debate on the report stage. Mr. Speaker, where has the minister been? Does he not know that the report stage debate ended last night? Now he proposes in a motion that there be granted to the report stage, if necessary, not more than another day.

An hon. Member: More delay.

[Mr. Lalonde.]

Mr. Gillespie: You didn't look at the motion yesterday.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I looked at the motion yesterday and I thought it was stupid then, and the government House leader knew it before it was even proposed. The fact of the matter is that the debate at the report stage is over. If someone tries to argue now that there are three recorded votes to be taken, I would reply that no further debate is permitted before those votes are taken. After those votes are taken there has to be a vote on the acceptance of the report of the bill, and no debate is allowed there. But what Standing Order 75C refers to is debate. There can be no more debate, and therefore I suggest that that part of the motion is a nullity and completely out of order.

● (1510)

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is the other part of the motion which proposes that there be not more than one day allotted to third reading. That is where we are, at the brink of the third reading stage. However, the Standing Order says "that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 75A or 75B in respect of proceedings at the stage at which a public bill was then under consideration". Third reading stage is not under consideration. We have not started it.

Those of us who were involved in the proceedings of the committee that drew up these rules, even though we did not like them, knew that the whole idea was to find a means to end debate at the request of the government when that debate was going on too long. In this case we are back to old C. D. Howe himself. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) knows, if and when the question is before the House he will have an opportunity to debate whether it is a wise move or whether it is similar to other moves. The point the hon. member is raising now is one of a point of order to the effect that the motion ought not to be put for some reason or another and that we ought to proceed to the calling of the question in this way.

With respect to the hon. member's second point which he is on now, I would like the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to address two problems that I have. The first point is that while the hon. member is perfectly correct—and the point has obviously occurred to the Chair as well—that the effort of the motion to cover a stage which has concluded in terms of discussion is now redundant, nevertheless at the time the notice was given the stage was still before the House and the notice is required. Therefore, since the notice was required at a time when the stage was before the House, the notice had to include that stage.

In the interval the stage terminated, making the motion redundant. Presumably the House now has to insist that the motion conform to the notice or be in the same terms, otherwise I am sure that the complaint would be that the motion differs from the notice. It seems to me that there is a trap and that the only cautious way to conform to the Standing Order,