

Supply

Further, when we go into committee of the whole on the supply bill, every item to which the hon. member takes exception will be before the committee, and all the others, for discussion and decision.

Mr. Nielsen: But no recorded vote.

Mr. MacEachen: And he will be able, if he wishes to follow the advice of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to consider taking certain actions on third reading. He can have votes in committee, on second reading and on third reading. He has full parliamentary latitude. I would hope we would not find this was an allotted day and have a proceeding at this stage that I do not think is contemplated.

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members for their very interesting comments. Hon. members who have not studied this interesting procedural point too closely, I think, will have reached the same conclusion as I, that the matter is somewhat confusing. As some of the hon. members who took part in this discussion have pointed out, this is actually the first time we have been faced with this situation, with this difficulty, so it does take perhaps a bit of imagination, and I would think a lot of good will on the part of the Chair, on behalf of hon. members, to interpret the rules and the Standing Orders in a way that will be fair to the House, and to all hon. members. It is perhaps in this light that I have tried to interpret the arguments put forth by hon. members during the course of this discussion.

• (1620)

I should like to refer at the outset to the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. He made reference, in the first instance, to the form of the notices which have been filed. The President of the Privy Council also referred to that point, and I think it also was mentioned by the hon. member for Yukon. All who referred to this point agreed that it was not the substance of the discussion, and with this I also agree. However, I would still like to enter the caveat that, although this form of notice has been used before, it was used in circumstances where there was not too much time for the Chair to object. It is always difficult for the Chair to declare such motions out of order, preventing hon. members from having the opportunity of voting upon them. That is why in all such circumstances the Chair must exercise leniency and bring to the attention of hon. members that what the Standing Order provides for is for a notice of objection, not a motion or an amendment as such.

If hon. members were to adopt the practice of making these notices motions rather than notices of objection to an item, importing argument and debate, then I can see that we would get into some difficulties because they would be more motions, on which actually we could not vote, than they would be notices. I hope the practice will develop in the other direction and members will make an effort to limit the wording of these notices to that of a notice of objection, instead of making the notices amendments which are put in the form of argument. Therefore, I agree on this point with hon. members that a ruling on such an important matter should not be made on the form of the notices that are before us.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

The second point made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre—so long ago that I forget whether it was his second, third, or fourth point, but I believe it was the second point he made—was to the effect that notices of opposition are intended to provide an opportunity to vote on certain items only at the cut-off time, or when the guillotine comes into play—if guillotines ever come into play. My impression is that this is the procedure that we have followed until now. Notices have been considered and a vote taken on the item opposed only at the very last moment when the guillotine came into play at the end of the period.

Actually, there is nothing to prevent the House from considering these motions outside of the provisions of Standing Order 58(10). I refer hon. members to the possibility of doing this under the provisions of Standing Order 32(1)(k), which reads as follows: "The following motions are debatable: (K) for the consideration of any motion under the order for the consideration of the business of supply." I have even wondered why the House has not taken advantage of these provisions to bring these items under consideration forward for debate before the House reaches the last minute on a finally allotted day. That is a possibility that is always open to the House, and for this reason I do not think I can accept the argument advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre on this particular point.

I was also impressed, if I may say so, by his argument with reference to the difficulty of following the procedure now proposed by hon. members who have brought these notices of motions, namely that the House might be called upon to vote twice on the same item. It could be said that this situation is hypothetical or that the objection is premature, that it would be at a later date when the matter came up for a vote the second time that that argument could be taken.

It may be an obiter dictum at this time to rule on this point, but I think it might be worth referring hon. members to May's eighteenth edition, the last paragraph at the foot of page 483 and the first paragraph at the top of page 484. I will not read it all because it would take too much time, but the suggestion made by the learned author is that there is nothing wrong with this kind of procedure. He says:

The various stages through which a bill progresses (normally but not necessarily on separate days) are intended by the practice of Parliament to provide so many opportunities not only for consideration, but also for reconsideration. Such stages may be taken to include the passage of any necessary financial resolution. Thus an entire bill may be regarded as one question which is not settled until it is passed. And hence no objection can be taken to an amendment on any particular stage on the ground that it raises again a question decided on an earlier stage.

And the author continues along this line. I think this is a relevant citation and that hon. members would like to think about it. In any event, I do not believe that this was the main point of contention of the hon. member.

The President of the Privy Council, supporting the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, said that this is either an allotted day or it is not an allotted day. I find it easy to rule that it is not an allotted day. My understanding of the rules presented to the House, and adopted by the House in 1968, is that they were intended to set up an