

Therefore the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre had unquestionably the right to speak as he did, on the motion made by the Minister of Finance—but could he speak more than forty minutes? Did he come under the exception provided for under standing order 37? In other words, was he speaking in reply immediately after the minister?

I have since given the most serious consideration to the interpretation of this standing order and as I said the whole question hinges on the meaning of the words "in reply" as they appear therein. What is a reply? According to the King's English dictionary, it is:

That which is said or written in answer to what is said or written by another; rejoinder; response.

Therefore, Mr. Woodsworth, in order to speak longer than forty minutes, was bound to argue against Mr. Robb's motion.

His speech, in this as in any other instance, had to be relevant to the issue. Was it relevant?

He actually objected to the Speaker leaving the chair until a certain grievance be aired before the house. He gave a reason for his objection, namely, that unless the house heard what he wished to ask the government on the question of freedom of speech, the ways and means for collecting revenue could not be considered.

As I have said, under an ancient constitutional doctrine, the redress of grievances is considered before the granting of supplies or the consideration of ways and means; and members may then discuss various questions without moving any amendment. As Bourinot says, 4th edition, page 421, a great latitude is allowed on such occasions.

I have come to the conclusion that the expression of any reasonable grievance on the motion for the Speaker to leave the chair is a sufficient reply to bring a member's speech under the provision of standing order 37. I cannot conceive a case where he could then be irrelevant. It is not necessary that his observations should deal with the subject matter of the resolutions to be considered in committee. The member objects to anything being considered at all until he has had a hearing. Of course, if an amendment or a second reading of a bill, were moved, discussion should be properly confined to its subject matter. But there was no amendment in Mr. Woodsworth's case.

Standing Order 37 being a restrictive regulation, as such it must be given the broadest construction possible. In cases of uncertainty

the benefit of the doubt must be given to freedom of speech in parliament.

I have considered the arguments from every angle and I have reached the conclusion that it is advisable to abide by the letter of this standing order. The ruling is that Mr. Woodsworth had the right to speak for more than forty minutes.

At eleven o'clock the house adjourned without question put, pursuant to standing order.

Monday, May 13, 1929

The house met at three o'clock.

PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEE

Mr. J. L. BROWN (Lisgar) moved:

That the recommendations contained in the eighth report of the select standing committee on miscellaneous private bills, presented on May 10, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

PEACE RIVER DISTRICT

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING SURVEY OF RESOURCES AND PURCHASE OF RAILWAY

Hon. CHARLES A. DUNNING (Minister of Railways and Canals): I desire to table a return moved by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Kennedy), for all correspondence with reference to the survey which will be undertaken jointly by the Canadian National Railways, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the British Columbia government into the resources of that country. I desire also to table a further reference moved by the hon. member for Peace River, for all correspondence between the Department of Railways and Canals and the Alberta government in reference to the joint purchase of the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia railway.

In connection with both these returns I should say that delay was occasioned by reason of the need of securing the permission of the presidents of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railways for the inclusion of certain personal correspondence. That permission has been granted, but I desire to say that this does not constitute in any way an acknowledgment of the principle that personal correspondence of that character can be brought down as a matter of right. In this case, however, both presidents were willing to have that correspondence included because of the nature of the correspondence and the information it conveys.