

*Private Bills*

**Mr. Blair:** We hope the point of humour does not escape you.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** In the days when we went into Committee of the Whole on a private bill, and this is still true in the standing committee to which a private bill is referred, the preamble to a private bill is debatable. It is not just a simple phrase—"therefore be it enacted". It contains allegations. It is cited in Beauchesne that the preamble is something which must be proven. I am talking at length about the preamble of this bill not because I am arguing or debating its validity, but to emphasize the fact it has to be proven. I am trying to make the point it is a separate proposition from the clause itself. What is before us is not just a one-shot item. It has three parts, the title, preamble and clause.

I submit it should be in order to move this kind of amendment. I suppose the hon. member, instead of moving this amendment to delete clause 1, could have moved an amendment to delete the preamble. Would the same argument have been raised? If Standing Order 75 envisages debate at the report stage when amendments are put down it does not seem consistent with that decision of the house to say on a point of order that a bill with only one clause in it is not debatable at this stage. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider that if this point of order raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is sustained what would stop the government from bringing in one-clause bills from now on? The government is pretty good at that. They are not only good at omnibus bills. They can write an awful lot into one clause. Any bill which the government did not want debated at the report stage could be presented as a bill with only one clause.

**Mr. Aiken:** That is the best argument you have come up with.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** There have been such bills. Sometimes a government amending bill seems to amend two or three sections of the original bill by lumping them all into a one-clause bill. This would result in one-clause bills, although they might cover a dozen subjects, not being capable of being amended or debated at the report stage.

I welcome the word of approval I just got from my "N.D.P." friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka. That is a reference to an error made by the press a while ago which we both enjoyed. Come on over.

Denial of the right to move an amendment to a one-clause bill is opening the door to

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

tactics by which the right of debate at the report stage could be taken away. I submit, Mr. Speaker, this is an important point. I recognize the validity of your raising the question and asking that it be discussed. I submit very strongly that we did provide for debate at the report stage, not on the bill as a whole or of a general character but on the clauses. What my friend has done has been in keeping with the rules. He is asking that the one clause be deleted. That is separate from the question whether the title or preamble carries. I realize they would not be worth much without the clause. They are separate parts from the clause itself.

If I may borrow the language used by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt at all but that this amendment is in order.

**Mr. Aiken:** I did not have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of looking up the references. I must admit I was completely against the argument of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre until he pulled the last arrow from his quiver.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The hon. member was looking at me. Perhaps it was mental telepathy.

● (5:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Aiken:** I really could not accept his argument that striking out the clause would not in fact be a negative. The reason is that rule 75 does not permit the amendment of the preamble or the title. It refers only to deleting a clause. His suggestion that perhaps the reverse might be true and that he might move to delete the preamble, and therefore the clause, does not follow. I could not say as a matter of realism that the rules should be applied to permit a negative vote by deleting the only clause in the bill.

However, I was quite impressed with the last suggestion made by the hon. member that refusing leave to delete the only clause would open the way to the government to introduce several subjects in one clause, and thus prevent any amendment on report stage. We have argued strongly against the introduction of many subjects in one bill. For that reason alone I would think a restricted interpretation of the actual words of the rule should be followed, and the amendment be allowed.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I notice that you are asking hon. members, according to standing order 75 (10), to