

Mr. HACKETT: I was merely trying to make it possible for the hon. member for Chicoutimi to follow through with what he started. Before we go into details section by section it has always been the practice to discuss a bill in general terms. I understand that the moneys being sought, for additions and betterments will affect the whole system. If they do affect the whole system, my submission is that the hon. member should not be precluded from discussing a matter which affects a part of the system. I do not want to protract the discussion at all; I want to be helpful. I am throwing out the suggestion that inasmuch as the betterments apply to the whole system it is competent to discuss the whole system which is to be improved and bettered by the bill.

The CHAIRMAN: That would be on section 2.

Mr. HACKETT: He could talk about it on section 2, but if that matter is included in section 2 it is possible to talk about it now under our interpretation of the rules.

The CHAIRMAN: I would refer the hon. members to standing order 58, subsection 2, which reads:

Speeches in committee of the whole house must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under consideration.

There have been times when a general discussion has been allowed on the first clause, but that is not according to the rule. It has been done only by unanimous consent of the committee when there has been no discussion on the principle of the bill on the motion for second reading. I should remind hon. members that when we are in committee of supply a general discussion is allowed on the first item, departmental administration. But we are not now in committee of supply. We are in committee of the whole on this bill. The principle was approved by the house when the bill was given second reading. An opportunity was given to all members to discuss the principle then, and now I must ask hon. members to abide by the rules and to discuss each clause as it is reached.

Mr. HACKETT: Mr. Chairman, there certainly is a misunderstanding. If you feel it is your duty to depart from what has been the practice in the house for a very substantial period, that on the first clause of a bill a general discussion may take place—

Mr. CHEVRIER: That was never the practice.

Mr. MACKENZIE: No, only during the war.

Mr. HACKETT: My right hon. friend opposite can refer to the rule, but I can turn to innumerable instances of departure from it in this session and in previous sessions.

Mr. MACKENZIE: May I meet my hon. friend's wishes by suggesting that clause 1 stand, and that he raise the point he has in mind on clause 2?

Mr. HACKETT: This putting things off and attempting to preclude discussion according to the practice on the basis of which we have carried on business is not satisfactory to members of the house. If an accepted interpretation is to be departed from there is a procedure, which is known to all the members of the house, to bring that about. But invariably, for years, and on innumerable occasions this session, a general discussion on the first clause has been permitted. We are all anxious to get on with the business and to get home, and I think it is well not to make any departure now from what has been or *modus operandi*. I am perfectly familiar with the book, but nobody knows better than you, Mr. Chairman, that we have frequently built up customs which depart from the letter of the law. I am merely suggesting that we would do well at this stage of the session to go on as we have done up to the present and permit a discussion of the bill in general terms before we pass the first clause.

Mr. MACKENZIE: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, my hon. friend, probably with the best intentions in the world, is entirely incorrect in regard to the rules. During the war on the war appropriation measure it was agreed by all parties that we would have a general discussion on the first item of the appropriation, and so the custom grew up to which my hon. friend has referred, and I think also in supply on agriculture. But it is not the accepted rule of this house.

Mr. HACKETT: It is the accepted practice of this house.

Mr. MACKENZIE: No, it is not.

Mr. GREEN: On the point of order, Mr. Chairman, we in the official opposition, and I think in the other opposition parties as well, are very much interested in an attempt to stop discussion on the first clause of the bill.

Mr. MACKENZIE: I rise to another point of order, Mr. Chairman. That is imputing motives to members of the administration and their supporters. There is no attempt to avoid discussion.

Mr. GREEN: The right hon. gentleman is a bit touchy today. I do not believe I imputed motives to anybody. I do say that this privilege or this right of a fairly wide