

Western Grain Transportation Act

House leader. The position of his Party has been given. The Chair invites argument on the merit of the point raised, not on another matter.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, you heard the arguments of the Parliamentary Secretary on the item about which I was just talking. It was not until last Thursday that my colleague from Hamilton Mountain could raise the point of order with the Chair because we waited until we had a response from the Government on the matter, and then the Hon. Member raised it at the first opportunity. For anybody to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The timing is not an issue. The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain has made his point. He has had ample opportunity to do it. I invite the Hon. Member not to waste the time of the House but to give his argument.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, that was an issue. It was made an issue by the Government, and I am responding to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Rosemont (Mr. Lachance).

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair does not propose to hear fallacious and repetitious points of order which add nothing to the debate. At this point the Chair has heard spokesmen from each of the main Parties. The Chair will defer, carefully review the record, and render a decision. At this stage the Chair will go back to the Hon. Member for Rosemont who had the floor.

Mr. Benjamin: I thought I had the floor, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member was abusing the time of the House. He was not dealing with the point of order.

Mr. Deans: That is nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not prepared to hear repetition and wasteful interventions.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain. I will not be repetitious or deal with arguments that have been put by my colleague, the House Leader for our Party.

I want to deal just briefly with the role of the Speaker and the role of the House as it pertains to addressing points of order of this type. As Mr. Speaker will be aware, this kind of question has vexed successive Speakers, and the history of points of order of this type goes back a number of years. It addressed the fundamental question of the role of the House of Commons, the purpose of the House of Commons, and the intent and purpose of divisions in the House.

Among the roles of the House of Commons perhaps the clear and most important one is the role of legitimizing, to legitimize or to legalize, if you will, the proposals of the Government. Obviously it is in the executive, in the Crown's interest, that this function not take too long. The role of the Speaker in this natural conflict between Government, with its desire to have expeditious treatment of its proposals, and Parliament, with its desire to give fair and proper consideration to the proposals that have been put forward by the Crown, is that of uniquely protecting the House from the Crown. Indeed, when Speakers are appointed, as is traditional they resist such appointment because in the past there have been Speakers who have offended the Crown. They have been known to lose their heads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair invites the Hon. Member to be specific about the point of order before us. The Chair is well aware of the problem in the decision and is aware of the responsibility, but would the Hon. Member deal with the particular point of order before us?

• (1130)

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I will get very quickly to the point I was trying to make. I have no desire to take undue time. In terms of legitimizing and legalizing Crown proposals, the House is required to exercise responsibility by ultimately reaching a decision, by dividing. When we do so the majority prevails and the question put has the force of law, if passed. To do so, it is absolutely fundamental or imperative that the question put be clear, be simple, and be understood. It is impossible to get that kind of clarity from questions which contain more than one simple principle. For that reason the question of second reading, which is vote on principle, must be clear. To put in two, three, four or more principles makes that fundamental division or decision unclear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The point was well made by the House Leader of the Hon. Member's Party. He is not breaking new ground. I implore him, if he has something to contribute, to please get to the point, not repeat and take up the time of the House on a matter which has been well argued by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, let me sum up by saying that the argument has been well argued by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North. It has been well argued by many, many Members over a number of years. It has vexed Speaker after Speaker after Speaker, and it will continue to vex Speaker after Speaker after Speaker as long as there continues to be this mixing of principles. I suggest to the Chair that perhaps this is an appropriate time for this vexing problem to be put behind future Speakers, and that a decision be made in favour of the House, not the Crown—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member has made his point. Again the Chair is appealing to the House. The Chair wants to