

Northwest Territories Act

care. In spite of that argument Hon. Mr. Glen ruled against him, that the motion was debatable. You see, Your Honour this is a case where the government side and the opposition side look at things differently. I can well understand that the government are anxious to cut out all debate that can be cut out, and the opposition on the other hand—

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. member should address himself to the extent to which the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair on a money resolution is debatable. I think it has been agreed by all hon. members that the motion is debatable. The only question which concerns me at the moment is the extent to which it is debatable.

Mr. Green: I submit that Your Honour cannot in fairness get away from the ruling made by Hon. Mr. Glen.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I intend to be fair. I do not think the hon. member's statement should go that far.

Mr. St. Laurent: The hon. member cannot speak without suggesting such implications.

An hon. Member: It is his nature.

An hon. Member: He is all twisted.

Mr. St. Laurent: If he can, he does not very often.

Mr. Green: I submit I am entitled to explain that from the opposition point of view this is one stage at which we get information which helps us eventually to debate the bill. Legislation is brought in by the government. They have the advice of numerous members of the civil service, and the opposition is always in the position of having to be more or less participating in a quiz contest. We have to find out what these proposals are all about and ordinarily, where a matter is at all complicated, it is of great value to us to have a statement by the minister concerned at this stage, and to have a brief debate. It helps us to fulfil our function of scrutinizing all legislation. It is a little different during the discussion of a bill because once a bill has been introduced and we are debating second reading we are then limited to the principle of the bill. On the resolutions preceding bills there can be a different approach. We can get the general picture of the background of the government's proposal. A debate at this stage is very important from our point of view.

The Prime Minister's own suggestion was that all that could be debated was whether it would be worth while to set up a committee of the house. He said, as recorded at page 2894 of *Hansard* for June 4:

I said that there should not be any protracted debate unless there are members who think that

[Mr. Green.]

the matter suggested is so futile that it is not worth while setting up a committee.

Surely even to decide whether or not it is worth while to set up a committee there must be a general debate such as was approved by Hon. Mr. Glen. For these reasons I would ask Your Honour to hold that there can be a general debate but that from there on it is in your hands as to how far the debate should go, and that can only be decided on each individual resolution. I do not think there is any way in which a rule can be laid down saying that we stop here or we stop there. Discretion should be left in the hands of the presiding officer.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, like the Prime Minister I expressed myself with regard to this same point of order the last time it was raised, namely on the 4th of June. Therefore I shall not take too many minutes now—and even that is with Your Honour's permission—because I think that as between the Prime Minister and myself, and as between Your Honour and myself, if I may put it that way, we have narrowed the question considerably. When this matter was being discussed before Your Honour said there was no doubt in your mind but that the motion was debatable. In that statement you were re-echoing the view expressed by Mr. Speaker Glen on February 23, 1942, when he said that this motion is clearly debatable. I am not so sure that that was implied in the first objection the Prime Minister raised to debate at this time, but certainly in later discussion on it the Prime Minister took that position as well, namely that there was no doubt but that the motion is debatable.

The question Your Honour feels you must decide is the same question that puzzled Mr. Glen in 1942, namely the extent of the debate. In 1942 Mr. Speaker Glen suggested that the extent of the debate might be narrowed by the use of that phrase which he coined, namely that the debate should be directed to the negative of the question. I submit that that way of putting it creates quite a difficulty. What would be the situation in the house if after this motion is put six, eight or ten members of the opposition side were to get up and speak to the negative of the question and oppose the motion for the Speaker to leave the chair for the house to go into committee of the whole on a certain resolution? Would Your Honour then deny to members on the government side the right to speak to the affirmative of the question? With all due respect to that aspect of the ruling Mr. Glen made in 1942, it seems to me that it is difficult to carry it out, for it implies a one-sided debate.