

part of the bill. But the Committee of the Whole is not the House. In fact, Your Honour frequently has to draw our attention to that. You are not unaware, as the Hon. Lucien Lamoureux, of what goes on around here. However, as Mr. Speaker, you are aware only of what goes on in the House, not of what goes on in the Committee of the Whole.

Under our new rules, when a bill goes to a standing committee and comes back for the report stage, we can of course cope with this problem by putting down report stage amendments. In fact, I have frequently defended the establishing of that new process as one of the best things we have done around here. It is now possible for a bill that has gone to a standing committee to come back here and become subject to report stage amendments which are debated in the House with Mr. Speaker in the Chair and to have recorded votes on each amendment. As a result, the House can make a decision on every individual point. If this bill were being sent to a standing committee instead of being dealt with by Committee of the Whole House, that would apply. When the bill came back at the report stage, members could pick out the parts with which they disagreed and put down the appropriate amendment. The House could then make its decision.

However, the motion calls for this bill to go to Committee of the Whole House, and our rule is quite clear. When a bill is reported from Committee of the Whole House, there is no debate and no amendments are allowed at that point. So, the House itself will have no chance whatsoever, despite the assurance of the President of the Privy Council, to vote on the individual propositions either at second or third reading.

I submit that because of this situation, very serious consideration will have to be given to it. Your Honour has been working pretty diligently from your seat up there on high and you may have a ruling by the time this debate is over. On the other hand, you may like to take it under consideration. The point made by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants carries weight when he says that a lot depends on how considerable the opposition is to this section or that. He quoted Mr. Speaker Macnaughton on that point, and it may be that Your Honour may wish to reserve your judgment.

The heart of the appeal that is being made is that the House should have the right to vote separately on these different individual propositions, and notwithstanding the assertion made by the President of the Privy Council, that right is not given to us on the one vote on second reading. It will not be given to us on the one vote on third reading, and we do not get a chance to vote at the report stage on this bill. Therefore, I say that this right is being denied.

Another argument of the President of the Privy Council is that there is one principle involved, that this bill is to improve the organization of the government of Canada. That is a nice play on words, and we have had a fair amount of that today. But in general terms, surely that principle applies only to the setting up of new departments and to shoving or pushing the ministers

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around a bit. When you get down to the question of Parliamentary Secretaries, to the amendment of the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, or to amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Act, surely you are getting a long way from the broad general principle of reorganizing the government of Canada. I do not think that a case can be made for the assertion that this is just one general proposition. It is a mixed bag of nine parts, with at least seven or eight different propositions in those nine parts, plus all the individual items that are set out in the schedules. I think this is a most unsatisfactory way to deal with the business before us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to take part in this most important debate.

I commend the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) for raising a point of order, so as to show, once more, the embarrassment where the hon. members find themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the arguments of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) and, from the way he talks, one quickly understands that for the government it has become a matter of fact and that, more and more, motions or bills will be moved that will bear on a whole series of separate proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss briefly a particular point. The President of the Privy Council bases himself on the principle that more and more, in the past, the Chair has accepted the principle of omnibus bills, that is bills which contained several different proposals.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my own group, I want to say that the principle of omnibus bills has become for the government a weapon which allows it to handle in its own way the vote of each and every government and opposition member. This principle has become a weapon against democracy and the voting freedom of Parliament members.

Mr. Speaker, one may wonder about the meaning of the vote cast by a member since the right to vote in this House is one of the reasons why we have been elected. Now, the basic quality of a member's vote is that it is freely cast.

Secondly, his vote must be enlightened, that is to say, the member must be in a position to understand easily what it is about.

Let us remember the last omnibus bill containing some hundred amendments to the Criminal Code, and which raised for us a problem of conscience. At that time we either had to vote for the whole bill or to reject it.

It will be alleged that it is still possible for a member to object to a part of the bill he does not approve at the report stage, at the second reading stage or at the committee stage. But, Mr. Speaker, on second reading, the vote is not taken on that, but on the principle of the bill. If the practice of introducing omnibus bills is carried