

*Speaker's Ruling*

Clearly one of the purposes of omnibus bills is to group together multiple statutory amendments so that discussion in the House may be focused. As the government House leader in his former role as opposition critic explained on March 1, 1982 at page 15482 of *Hansard* in relation to the Canada post office bill:

—(Bill C-42) amended 14 other statutes to make them consistent with the new statute dealing with the post office. It is clear that grouping these is an aid, not a hindrance, to proper parliamentary discussion and decision.

[Translation]

Although omnibus bills are sometimes welcomed by both sides of the House, several objections have arisen to their use.

[English]

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond identified a number of them. He argued that the long title of Bill C-63 should properly indicate the purpose of the bill—that is to say, the termination of specific agencies—by naming the affected acts, thus establishing the relevancy between the different sections of the bill. To illustrate the lack of relevance between the various sections of the bill, he quoted from citation 626 of Beauchesne's sixth edition:

Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill.

[Translation]

In response, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader argued:

The umbrella of this particular legislation was made very clear in the budget. It indicated very clearly that the government planned to dissolve or terminate a number of corporations and other bodies for a central theme, being the ability to cut government expenditures and, therefore, as much as possible relieve the burden on the Canadian taxpayers—.

[English]

As to the question of the long title, I wish to refer all hon. members to my ruling of June 8, 1988 on page 16257 of *Hansard*:

A further point raised—was the insufficiency of detail in the long title of the Bill because it did not list all of the statutes being amended therein. Hon. members might wish to consult Dreidger's *The Composition of Legislation, Legislative Forms and Precedents* for

information on this point—On pages 153 and 154 there is an explanation of Canadian practice as it relates to long titles, which clearly demonstrates that every Act being amended need not be mentioned in the title—If hon. members feel, however, that such a course is necessary, I suggest that they should proceed by way of amendment and not by a decision of the Speaker to reject the Bill.

The principal objections of the hon. members for Cape Breton—East Richmond, Kamloops, and Ottawa—Vancouver are that this bill espoused six principles dealing with this disparate elements such as employment and immigration, ocean development, science policy, economic issues, and so on. They contend that it would be difficult to debate the full complexities of the affected areas at second reading and to come to a single decision. To this general argument, we can turn to the reply of Speaker Lamoureux on January 23, 1969 at page 618 of the *Journals*:

The vote on second reading is less a vote on the principle of the bill and more a decision of the House to send the bill on for further consideration at subsequent stages of proceedings. If this interpretation is correct, it seems it should be even less difficult for honourable Members to vote either for or against the main motion, since such vote would not constitute either approval of, or opposition to, the principle of the several propositions contained in the omnibus bill.

In a lengthy ruling on May 11, 1977, Speaker Jerome brought greater explanation on pages 5522 to 5524 of *Hansard*:

—there can be no doubt that a motion containing two or more substantive provisions is quite distinct from a procedural motion or a motion which is generally described as having only the effect of dealing with the progress of a bill. The practice in respect of substantive motions has never been extended to those motions which relate to the progress of a bill. The use of the omnibus amending bill is well enshrined in our practices, and I really can find no reason to set aside my predecessor's very clear and sound reasoning, or the practice. Nor can I find any authority which would support an order of the Chair at this second reading stage that the bill be divided—

This still leaves, as it has in the past every time this kind of argument has been put forward, some very deep concern about whether our practices in respect of bills do in fact provide a remedy for the very legitimate complaint of the hon. member that a bill of this kind gives the government, under our practices, the right to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related subjects—

I think an hon. Member of the House ought to have the right to compel the House to vote on each separate question—

Therefore, while I carefully guard the specific rulings on the contradiction between the principles of the bill and the motions that might be put forward until the actual stage arises, because we are speculating as to what the cases may be, it seems to me in advance that in a bill of this sort—a member ought to be able, if he wishes, to attempt through motions to delete under Standing Order 75(5) to