

I want to refer again to Beauchesne's sixth edition, the most recent edition of our procedural bible, if I can call it that, citation 634, page 194:

Nevertheless, the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related subjects, while a matter of concern—

As has been generated by arguments that we have heard today and other arguments in the past, and this is the operative part:

—is an issue on which the Speaker will not intervene to divide the bill.

Mr. Speaker, there is a long tradition, there is a long history, and the Speaker's position has consistently been the same; the Speaker will not intervene.

I do not think we are dealing with an omnibus bill here. We are dealing with an eight-page document that is designed to terminate certain corporations and other bodies.

Even if it were an omnibus bill, Mr. Speaker, and as I say, I am not prepared to concede that it is, I want to refer you to the Lamoureux decisions, page 434. The question before Speaker Lamoureux that day was: can an omnibus bill be considered by the House or should the Speaker order that it be divided? The decision was very clear. The bill can receive second reading in its existing form. In other words, Mr. Speaker, even if it were an omnibus bill, it could proceed.

I want to refer to the reasons given by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux because I think they are very important. I quote:

The government has followed a practice that has been accepted, rightly or wrongly, in the past.

This ruling was given on January 26, 1971, 21 years ago, Mr. Speaker. It is already saying very clearly the government has followed a practice that has been accepted from our past:

The bill will be allowed to proceed despite the possible difficulties presented by omnibus legislation. Although a legitimate complaint or grievance can be raised with respect to omnibus bills, it is not clear that a legitimate procedural argument can be made.

It states:

The House should note, however, that there is a third reading stage—

And it goes on and on. The bottom line is very clear. Speaker Lamoureux and other Speakers before and after him have made it very clear that they cannot or will not intervene to stop a bill or to divide a bill because there is in this House a long tradition of accepting those bills.

Point of Order

I want to read into the record a ruling by Speaker Fraser on June 8, 1988 on an omnibus question when he was faced with a similar argument and I quote:

In conclusion, the Canadian practice regarding the authority of the Chair to divide questions has been reserved solely for substantive motions which contain more than one proposition, where members object to their being taken together, and the Chair has determined it is possible to divide the motion into more than one distinct proposition.

He then goes on to refer to Speaker Sauve's ruling. This is her ruling:

For my part, in the present circumstances, there seems little point in offering yet another opinion on a question so well addressed by my distinguished predecessors. The matter is there for all to see. It may be that the House should accept rules or guidelines as to the form and content of omnibus bills but in that case the House, not the Speaker, must make those rules.

In other words, she gave a short, one paragraph argument saying no. There is ample precedent for omnibus bills in this House and the Speaker has never ever intervened to split them.

He then goes on to say:

The Chair therefore must rule that Bill C-130 is an omnibus bill. It has the single purpose of enacting an international agreement amending several statutes. As such it conforms to our practice and should be allowed to proceed.

Until the House adopts specific rules relating to omnibus bills, the Chair's role is very limited and the Speaker should remain on the sidelines as debate proceeds and the House resolves the issue.

We have taken a fair amount of time from the House today, not to hear a new argument but to hear an old one. Mr. Speaker, I argue before you that the conclusion should be the same as it has always been. First of all I do not accept that this is an omnibus bill, but that is almost irrelevant because in fact even if it were an omnibus bill, it is a bill that is totally within the guidelines of the House of Commons and we have every right as a House to deal with that issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would not have expected the government to use such clumsy arguments to defend a proposed bill, Bill C-63, an act to dissolve or terminate certain corporations and other bodies, namely the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, the Economic Council of Canada, the Science Council of Canada, the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, the International Centre for Ocean Development, and many agencies and commissions which we feel, Mr.