

Northern Canada Power Commission Act

As to the substantive part of the motion, with respect, I would think there is that freedom, I do not think a motion could be put that the bill be referred to a committee—I think we had some discussion on that—and Your Honour might well, within the terms of the Standing Order, require a different form of motion than one to refer the bill itself. But my hon. friend has been most careful to make the distinction between the bill and the subject matter of the recommendation.

The bill is founded on the recommendation, and I think this is a neat device permitting the committee of the whole in a very brief way, I hope, at an appropriate time, to consider this recommendation and make suggestions to the government. If it is a sensible government—which I always hope for, so far without anything to back up my hope—it will accept the suggestions and say to His Excellency: We think this recommendation should be changed in accordance with the suggestions of the committee of the whole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seems to me that the amendment we are discussing amounts to a direct negation of the motion before the House, which asks that the bill be read the second time and referred to a Standing Committee. It would appear to the Chair that if hon. members do not agree with the main motion, they will vote against it. I wonder whether any other hon. member would care to assist the Chair on this point.

Mr. Nielsen: It certainly was not my intention, when the amendment was prepared, to negate the motion now standing on the Order Paper, though it would have been very easy to do so; one would simply have to present a motion that the bill be not now read the second time. But I was careful to avoid doing so and to direct the amendment toward removing this bill from the Standing Committee and discussing its subject matter, because of its importance, in committee of the whole.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): With great respect, I was rather surprised to hear the comments Your Honour made a few moments ago while in the chair. In any event, I think that what we have to consider is the practicality of what we are doing. On other occasions, in the absence of any formalized procedure for dealing with matters in this way, Mr. Speaker has ruled that it is not possible to do these things; in other words, unless there is an ability on the part of the House to handle matters in the way proposed, such motions are out of order.

I believe the reverse situation is easy to understand. If a bill is set down for referral to a committee of the whole House, it is quite proper to move that it be read a second time and that the subject matter be referred to a Standing Committee. This is because a Standing Committee has the opportunity to examine witnesses in an informal way, explore the possibilities of the subject matter and then report its findings back to the House.

The amendment under discussion conceives putting this course in reverse, that is, not reading the bill a second time but sending the subject matter thereof to committee of the whole, without any procedural conception of what is to happen after that. I submit that the force of the

[Mr. Baldwin.]

amendment is to defeat the bill, because if it were carried the bill would not be read the second time and, as I understand the rules, that would be the end of it. The subject matter of the recommendation would be referred to a committee of the whole House. But for what purpose? The recommendation might be debated or examined, but there is no connected follow-up procedure for bringing the bill itself back before the House. On this ground alone, I believe Your Honour must find the amendment is not in order and should so rule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank hon. members for their assistance in connection with the procedural point. The hon. member for Peace River said we were plowing new ground for the Chair. Speaking personally, I should like to have some time to consider the arguments made by hon. members. If the House is agreeable, and if no other hon. members wish to contribute to the procedural discussion, I will reserve my decision on the procedural question and we will proceed in the interim.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, it would be very easy to amend the motion the Chair now has before it and simply move that the bill be not now read the second time. But I did not want to deprive the House of debating the subject matter of the recommendation.

Mr. Davis: You are all heart.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Before I begin my address, Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) to make sure I understood him correctly. Did he say he was in agreement with the principle of the equalization of power rates within the Yukon or within the Northwest Territories?

Mr. Nielsen: That is correct. No one would object to Yukon revenues being applied to Yukon equalization. I am sure this principle would be agreed to by the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Orange).

Mr. Thomson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wished to make sure I understood the hon. member correctly.

I should like to comment on one statement the hon. member made in his speech, namely, that a public utilities commission or board should be appointed to review electricity rates in the Yukon and in the Territories. I must say this is my view. I think we should set up a board to look after the interests of consumers in that part of the world, perhaps a local board which could have regard to local situations. It could take into account the profits made locally by these companies and see that they are providing service of an appropriate standard. I commend the hon. member on his suggestion and regret it is not embodied in the legislation. This is something which should be done in the future, and I hope the Parliamentary Secretary (Mr. Buchanan) will consider it in this light.

The stand taken by the New Democratic Party in connection with public power is well known. We believe