

The question for the Chair is: is there a relevancy? Is there, as the Deputy Speaker said on May 6, 1971, a set of guidelines? Is there a theme that runs between the contents of the Bill and subject to the umbrella which is raided by the terminology of the long title of the Bill?

To expand my argument of relevancy I would point out that the title of the Bill is, "An Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof". There is no reference in the title of the Bill to the releasing of coal lands under Clause 62. There is no reference in the Bill to the upgrading of the railway lines. There is a reference to the setting of the freight rates.

Therefore, we submit that the question to the Chair, as far as relevancy is concerned, is this: is there a relevancy between trying to tie together, in one Bill, releasing coal lands, upgrading rail transportation in western Canada, and setting freight rates? We submit that there is no relevancy in the Bill as it is drafted.

The second part of our argument concerns debate at second reading, and just exactly what it means. Citation 734 of Beauchesne states that:

● (1120)

The second reading is the most important stage through which the Bill is required to pass; for its whole principle is then at issue and is affirmed or denied by a vote of the House. It is not regular on this occasion, however, to discuss in detail the clauses of the Bill.

That citation is important because we are trying to debate what is contained in Bill C-155 on a coherent basis. It is difficult to do that when there are these competing interests within the Bill. More important, when debating time has been cut down through the new rules a Member must address himself or herself to three different aspects of the Bill within the ten-minute speech allotted at the second reading stage.

Once again I point out to the Chair that there are these three principles that we are debating—upgrading rail transportation, releasing coal lands, and setting grain freight rates. It is quite possible for a Member to be in favour of releasing the Dominion coal lands while at the same time violently opposing, as does the Progressive Conservative Party, the increase in grain freight rates. That is where we have difficulty in debating this Bill on a coherent basis at second reading.

The third part of our submission concerns the vote at second reading. At second reading stage the whole principle of the Bill is at question. Members of this House either affirm the principle of the Bill or deny it through one vote which we cast. It is impossible for us to cast a meaningful vote at second reading if there are competing interests within the Bill. We are not concerned if the Bill has one principle and its clauses expand on that principle to state how it will be carried into law. We are arguing that it is difficult to vote in a meaningful fashion if there are three competing principles upon which one vote must be passed. For that reason we submit that the Bill should be split by the Chair.

Western Grain Transportation Act

Finally, I wish to refer the House to Beauchesne, citation 120, which states that the Chair's responsibility is to see that debate, which includes votes, is carried forward in an orderly fashion. We suggest to the Chair that through that citation it has a responsibility to see that Bills have relevancy, that debate at second reading can be coherent, that the vote at second reading is meaningful and only addresses one principle, and that the Member should not be put at odds with different principles within the Bill.

In conclusion I would respectfully suggest to the Chair that the competing principles within the Bill, which are the upgrading of railway transportation lines, release of the Dominion coal lands, and the increase in the freight rates, set up an omnibus Bill situation or, "a complicated question" to which the Chair can rightfully address itself. In the interest of orderly debate and meaningful votes, the Chair should see the strength of our argument and split the Bill into the three areas suggested in order that the House can address itself to the principles of the Bill and vote in the way in which all of us were sent here to vote by our constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: At this point the Chair has heard spokesmen from each of the three Parties. The Chair does not care to have a repetition of the argument. If Hon. Members have something new to add to the point of order the Chair will listen, but it is asking Hon. Members not to simply repeat argument.

I see the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) on his feet. I will ask him to be very brief and not repetitious.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order with what I think is new material and what also may be of assistance to the Chair in terms of what the Parliamentary Secretary had to say on the point of order. I agree with the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) that it was ridiculous when it was suggested that this point of order should have been raised at first reading. How it could have been raised at that time totally escapes me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Simcoe North covered that point adequately. Does the Hon. Member have something to add to the point of order?

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Chair and the Parliamentary Secretary that roughly a month ago, May 19, we formally wrote to the Government requesting that the Bill be split. We made that letter public, and it was not until last Wednesday that the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) was told that the Government was not going to split the Bill.

● (1125)

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the Hon. Member is prepared to give argument, the Chair is prepared to hear it. But the Hon. Member is not giving argument; he is giving a history of previous events. This has been well stated by his