

Canada Elections Act

Mr. Dick: Thank you very much. Perhaps we could deal with a couple of clauses which have been approved, in order to indicate some *quid pro quo*. With unanimous consent, we can proceed. I believe the entire debate will be finished by tomorrow afternoon, anyway. If we arrive at an agreement now, and then an hon. member opposite rises and says "no" to my motion because of an irregularity, I will not be very happy.

If we establish agreement for all 18 motions at this time, then we will proceed through the list. There will not be much discussion, except on a few points; therefore, it will not take long. At this time I would prefer that Your Honour did not ask for unanimous consent, because my feelings at this moment may be different from my feelings later, after discussion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I intervene at this time without precluding other members from speaking. Perhaps the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) has forgotten that he has a motion which is not acceptable. Because it infringes upon the financial initiative of the Crown, the Chair has no authority to seek unanimous consent. The Chair could seek unanimous consent only to permit the government to get from the Governor General the royal recommendation. Therefore, I cannot accept the request of the hon. member to ask for unanimous consent with regard to the 18 motions.

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, I agree that the motions requiring a royal recommendation should be struck because they have been duplicated by the minister: he has adopted my wording and is able to receive royal recommendation; I am not. The same situation exists as far as the hon. member for Renfrew North-Nipissing East (Mr. Hopkins) is concerned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This proves the hon. member is aware of what is happening in the motions and there is no element of surprise. I have to apply the rules. My concern is not to seek an early Christmas adjournment but to look at the report stage of the bill on which there are motions of hon. members in order to determine whether they meet the requirements of the Standing Orders. We have not proceeded in any different way from other occasions. Actually, the Chair has demonstrated much co-operation.

[Translation]

In answer to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) who wants the act to be clear, I suggest that the act may be clear, but when the Chair must rule on the acceptability of an amendment, it must do so according to the rules, the precedents and the practice of the House. The Chair is not allowed to pass or amend legislation but it must apply the rules and ensure that the Constitution of Canada is complied with and serves hon. members as well as it can.

I offered my full cooperation. Finally I suggested that the easiest way to proceed was to seek unanimous consent for the motions introduced by the Acting President of Privy Council (Mr. Cafik). There is apparently some hesitation on the part of one member of the opposition to give unanimous consent to these four motions at the present time. So, I return to my first suggestion which would be to proceed immediately to the

study of the motions which are considered to be acceptable and unobjectionable, and group motions Nos. 2, 4 and 14 for the purpose of the debate, so that they may be disposed of with one vote. Later, we could consider and discuss separately motions Nos. 10, 11 and 18. In the meantime, the hon. members who are interested could meet and determine on which acceptable motions there is unanimity; then the Chair would be at the entire disposal of the House to formally seek its unanimous consent, and we could proceed with our study at the report stage.

[English]

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I have just one point. I do not think this is the time to commence negotiations, because the problem is clear: certain of these motions are procedurally out of order. It is my intention, and I rose to indicate it earlier, to seek unanimous consent on behalf of the government and on behalf of members of the committee. If the House does not want to deal with these motions, then let members withdraw unanimous consent and the bill will go forward without the motions. But I implore hon. members to realize what they are doing, because some of these motions are extremely important in terms of providing voting rights, for instance, to civilians voting with the armed forces overseas. If members want to deny that right, let them deny it; but I will put the question.

● (1552)

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse on a point of order.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): I am very sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to hear the interpretation to understand fully the House leader's remarks. Since there is no interpretation right now, it is very difficult to understand what the minister is saying.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the minister has the tendency to speak too fast. He might want to correct that.

Mr. Cafik: I can speak more slowly, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that I have indicated that I propose, in order to live up to my commitment to members of the committee, to move these motions on their behalf, with the consent of the government; and if the House decides it does not wish to provide that unanimous consent, they will accept that responsibility—but I will have fulfilled my commitment.

Mr. Scott: Mr. Speaker, the spirit we enjoyed in the committee was one of understanding and co-operation. As the deputy House leader said, the committee agreed that the matter would be proceeded with in that manner, and that was the understanding of all the parties. The minister made a commitment which he wishes to carry out. I think we should go along with it.