

that every member of the House will need help in order to debate the bill intelligently. Apart from the politics of it, this legislation is highly controversial and will have far-reaching effects. Surely it is incumbent upon the government to allow time for proper debate of its contents in the interests of public disclosure.

I believe that to present a bill on such a complex subject in this fashion is a gross abuse of the government's power. I let my argument stand there, Madam Speaker.

• (1700)

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, we have heard three interjections from the other side. I should like to emphasize a couple of points in response to some of the concerns expressed.

In response to the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Thomson), it is fair to say that the bill is complex, comprehensive and very complicated; there is no getting away from it. The bottom line, which really determines whether or not a bill is in order, is whether it deals with one subject. It does. It is all energy-related; there is no question about it. Basically it implements aspects of the national energy policy which were not implemented in Bill C-48. I think this is the only manner in which it can be done in a cohesive, rational and orderly fashion. Notwithstanding the fact that the bill is complicated, it contains a couple of entire acts for which there are precedents for it to be in order.

Going back to the early 1970s, the Unemployment Insurance Act was very comprehensive and was of similar magnitude. The government organization, 1970 bill contained within it entire acts.

Today we heard the suggestion that Mr. Speaker Jerome thought that there was something basically different in terms of an omnibus bill which amended an existing act as opposed to one which created one. With respect, I submit that I do not see any difference. I think the precedents would indicate quite clearly that on numerous previous occasions there have been bills of similar magnitude which have in themselves contained entire acts.

Because it is a tax bill, it is based upon a Ways and Means motion; there is no doubt about it. Some complaints were made today that because of this it will go to Committee of the Whole and falls under Standing Order 74(3), which reads:

Any bill based on a supply or a Ways and Means motion, after second reading thereof, shall stand referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Citations 521 of Beauchesne reads:

Bills related to Ways and Means resolutions are referred to a Committee of the Whole House.

This is not something new or something which has been suddenly sprung upon Parliament. If the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) had the opportunity of its going to a standing committee, he would probably find witnesses, if he searched long and hard enough, who might not like certain aspects of it. I am sure the government could find some witnesses who liked it. Then we would have some witnesses saying that it was great and others saying that it was not. It is

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not a question of discretion. It is based upon a Ways and Means motion and therefore it goes to Committee of the Whole; it is as simple as that. This does not mean that members cannot move amendments; of course they can. We can have as lengthy a discussion of those amendments in the Committee of the Whole as we would have if it were referred to a standing committee.

With the greatest respect, there is really no precedent for Madam Speaker to split the bill. Of course, there is the precedent which occurred on a motion during the flag debate, but I would suggest that to break such ground would cause considerable problems for the Chair in the future. I cannot conceive of any omnibus bill or complicated bill, which may deal with several principles, being brought before the House by the government when we would not have the opposition imploring Madam Speaker to split it.

There was the comment of Mr. Speaker Lamoureux when he asked, "Where do we stop?" In a sense that was really an *obiter dictum*, because he did not do anything about it. He was sort of musing out loud, "At what point do you go too far?" Notwithstanding the fact that the bill may contain several different aspects, all of which are part of the National Energy Program, it is not going too far or crossing the bounds to which he referred but never really defined. He was sort of hypothesizing a situation which did not develop, and I suggest that it has not developed here.

There may be some fine-tuning which has taken place since the announcement of the national energy policy, but no one can deny that there is a common thread, denominator or common link through all aspects contained in the bill—that this implements the national energy policy. Some people may say that it is complex; there is nothing new about that. Some people may say that it contains more than one principle; there is nothing new about that. Many bills have been complex and contained a number of principles. Members can move amendments as the bill goes through its various stages. It may create difficult decisions for hon. members when it comes to the final vote as to whether or not hon. members like it. It may contain some things they like and some things they do not like. This is nothing new. This happens. This is why we are elected. We are elected to make decisions.

With regard to the schedules, they can be amended; there is no doubt about that. I do not see why the fact that some schedules are incorporated, which in themselves are entire acts, somehow means that they are removed from the main body of the theme running throughout the entire bill. There is no question of this bill being rammed through or anything like this. I think the first draft was published last summer. As the hon. member pointed out, it is a complicated bill. There has been an appreciation of that fact on the part of the government, which accounts for one of the reasons the first draft was released some months ago—in order to give those interested members a considerable amount of time to review it. Of course, it implements a policy first announced back in the fall of 1980.