

Northern Ontario Pipe Line Corporation

In 1917 there were two instances. The first was the bill having to do with the Canadian Northern Railway, which had four clauses and a title. I have in my hand the page numbers on which those various clauses were called and postponed. Clause 1 was postponed on page 4990; clause 2 was called on that page but did not get postponed until page 4996, and so on. As I say, I have all the information, but the point I am making is crystal clear. I have left nothing out. It is crystal clear that before the closure motion was moved all of the clauses had been considered by the committee.

Then, Mr. Chairman, in 1917 there was that extremely contentious measure, the wartime elections act. What historic memories, what a terrific battle it brings back, and yet the House of Commons, painfully, laboriously, went through the task of seeing to it that every clause, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and the schedule, was considered before any attempt was made to move the closure. In fact, on that point, since I am rushing along and not putting all the figures on, may I say that on pages 5701 and 5702 Mr. Meighen said, in reply to a question:

I do not know what the arrangement is, but I want to remind the hon. gentleman who is leading the opposition that all the clauses can be considered now and the notice given. I do not think the notice need apply to any particular day, as long as it is given at a previous sitting.

That statement of Mr. Meighen means that the notice of closure was given after all the five clauses and the schedule of the wartime elections act had been considered.

I am not a lawyer, Mr. Chairman; the Prime Minister is; but for the life of me I cannot see how he can stand up as leader of this House of Commons and ask us to rely on that detestable precedent of 1932, which the hon. member for Kamloops at least goes so far as to call invalid, and which Mr. King criticized so strongly. Yet he stands here and asks the house to fall back on that when we have these three clear-cut precedents in which Mr. Borden and Mr. Meighen, who were the draftsmen of closure, followed the rule to the limit. I call upon the Prime Minister to read again what he said to us in 1946 when he quoted scripture to us as well. I say to him, he can do these things; he has the power; he has the majority, but I did not think it was his manner to do such a thing.

I also point out, Mr. Chairman, that in addition to the statement the Prime Minister made today to the effect that the government would rather have followed the earlier, the better, precedent, it is also a matter of fact that the government started out to do it

[Mr. Knowles.]

that way. Whatever explanation the government may now give about the frustration it experienced at our hands from this side, the fact of the matter is that last Thursday the Minister of Trade and Commerce sought to move to postpone clause 1, and then to postpone clause 2, and so on. There is no doubt what they were trying to do. They were trying to abide by the rule; they were trying to do it the right way. They were trying to do it the way the Prime Minister preferred them to do it. It was only when it became inconvenient to do it the right way that the government said, "Well, it looks as though we will have to pull Mr. Bennett out of the shadows and deify that precedent as something we can fall back on," despite what Mr. King said about the whole proceeding in 1932. As I say, the government started out in this instance to follow the rule as it is set out in standing order 33. They set out to follow the practice outlined clearly by Mr. Meighen back in 1913. They set out clearly to follow the precedent of 1913 and the two in 1917 but faced with frustration, faced with the fact that it was going to be difficult and inconvenient, it was decided that the rule book could be thrown in the Ottawa river.

Mr. Martin: Why do you say, "inconvenient"? You made it impossible to discuss.

Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North): It is not impossible to obey the rules.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. friend the Minister of National Health and Welfare suggests that we have made it impossible.

Mr. Martin: To discuss.

Mr. Knowles: Without going into the question of whether or not we made it impossible I say to you sir, and I say to the government, no matter what road block or difficulty the opposition puts in the road of the government that does not give the government the right to break the rules. It does not give even the Prime Minister the right to urge this house to accept as in order a motion which I am sure he knows in his heart of hearts is not in keeping with the definition of the rules spelled out by Mr. Meighen, or in keeping with the three clear-cut, well-established precedents that were worked out in 1913 and in 1917.

I would say to the government that back in 1913 when this matter was being discussed there was a Liberal of that day who later became a unionist—and I guess that means he was eventually a Tory. I refer to Mr. Guthrie. Mr. Guthrie was a pretty critical Liberal in 1913 and he did not like the closure rule, nor did his leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. At that time he tried to build up a case to the effect that it might