

Canada Elections Act

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, if I understood you correctly, the objection to my motion No. 1 is that it seeks to add to section 13 of the act, and as Bill C-5 amends a subsection of section 13 my motion goes beyond the scope of the bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I wish to correct the hon. member. I said the hon. member's amendment goes beyond the clause to which it is attached. It does not go beyond the bill, but beyond the clause.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, since the clause in Bill C-5 that I am attempting to amend opens up section 13 of the act, I suggest my amendment might be considered if there were unanimous consent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there are no other comments I would seek unanimous consent to the proposition of the acting House leader on motions Nos. 6, 13 and 16. Is there consent? Precedents allow this to be done. It does not mean that the Chair feels it is a good habit to develop this method of proceeding, but if there is unanimous consent, the House is master of its own rules and these three amendments—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, there are four—Nos. 6, 13, 15 and 16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry; I omitted No. 15.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I suspect there may be some feeling that the government is attempting to go beyond the scope of our rules on these four amendments. The amendments were brought forward at the request of members of the standing committee, not on the initiative of the Crown. I think that should be known. We are simply trying to respond to the representations made by members, on both sides, of that committee who requested me to take this action. I agreed. I do not want hon. members to feel that the government has some self-serving objective in bringing forward these amendments at this time.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, we are not questioning the motivation of the government, but we find ourselves in a strange position this afternoon, much the same as we found ourselves in on another occasion with respect to \$1 items. I say, with respect, that the Chair had been given notice of the difficulties and had time to consider this very controversial and difficult matter of procedure. Now we find ourselves, without notice from the Chair, dealing with important procedural matters. The minister said there have been discussions. I think I am speaking for all members when I say it is regrettable that we now find ourselves faced with these difficulties, without any notice.

I hope this is not going to be the practice. It does not lead to swift consideration of the business of the House. I have not had notification of any difficulty from the procedural point of view. It is obvious from the consternation of the deputy House leader for the government that he has not received any indication of difficulty. I cannot speak for the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles); perhaps he has. We

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

are dealing with an important piece of legislation with respect to which there are procedural objections. Quite frankly, I regret that very much.

● (1542)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I regret to say it, but the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) is making a mountain out of a molehill. There is no trouble. Your Honour has done the right thing by studying the proposed motions with regard to their procedural acceptability. Your Honour has given the opinion that there are indications of unanimous consent to proceed, and Your Honour has indicated that if that is the case, you will agree. Thus, why do we not get unanimous consent and put motions Nos. 6, 13, 15 and 16 on the list of motions to be dealt with?

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Not having been advised of the procedure the leader of the government suggested to the House, Mr. Speaker, I was very much surprised. However, following consultations with my colleagues, and because we have closely watched the progress of Bill C-5 which is currently under review and which has reached the report stage, we understand that the intention is to study motions Nos. 6, 13, 15, and 16 together. Moreover, the government leader has consulted me, as he must have no doubt consulted the other leaders to come to a consensus which would be acceptable to all members.

I understand that this may be a somewhat improvised procedure, but because the House has had the opportunity to consider seriously all these amendments, I feel that we should accept this intelligent way to proceed and that we should get on with it. But I should like to emphasize once again that this is a very important piece of legislation and that Canadians should abide by the election act when they are called upon to vote. Its provisions must be as clear as possible, because it is always the same people who never study the legislation which they are responsible for enforcing on election day. That is why I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that come election day, voters have the power and, if we want to make sure that they use this power, the people who are responsible for enforcing the legislation must be informed of it as much as possible. As members of parliament, we must see to it that the legislation is not complicated, but that it is clear and easy to understand.

[English]

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be difficult. I understand the point raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The deputy House leader for the government has indicated that he would like unanimous consent for a number of motions which stand in his name. I, for one, would be prepared to support that request. I am not sure whether the deputy House leader for the government is listening.

Mr. Cafik: I am listening.