

There is no doubt in my mind that there is substance in the point raised by the honourable Member. I am also quite impressed by the argument advanced by other honourable Members in support of his objection. I think that in a way he has a legitimate grievance or complaint. My question is, of course, whether he can advance a legitimate procedural argument, and this is where I find some difficulty. As the House knows, the Chair has to be guided to a considerable extent by precedents established over a number of years.

During the hour or so that this debate has been going on, the learned gentlemen at the Table have obtained for me, at my request, certain precedents showing that similar points have been raised in the past. This is not the first time we have before us a measure of the kind which have been called omnibus bills. On many occasions objections have been raised very strongly by honourable Members—I would not like to go into all the details but briefly, if honourable Members will allow me, on April 2, 1953 the House had before it amendment to the National Defence Act. Mr. Brown of St. John's West raised the point: "I have no doubt the Minister can explain why this resolution covers two or three acts. Is it customary to do that?"

As Members will see, the point was being raised in 1953, and I am sure it was raised even before that. The Minister of National Defence at that time, Mr. Brooke Claxton, claimed that this was what had been done in the past, and, as was done today, suggested that this had long been the practice of the House.

Anyway, nothing was done, and the bill was presented to the House unchanged. It was voted upon in its original form.

The question was brought up again; the same bill was subjected to the same objection. The objection of the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was reported at length in *Hansard* on December 10, 1953, at page 797. His words are preserved there for posterity and perhaps I should repeat them for the benefit of double posterity, if that exists. "This procedure places the Members of the House in the situation of being faced with a resolution which deals with eight different matters. Naturally there are eight different principles involved under ordinary circumstances. As far as I can see from casual examination, most of these things are matters which perhaps everyone in the committee would agree with. When we hear more about them, that may not be so. In any event, it might very well be that amongst those eight amendments is one with which we would disagree violently and therefore feel called upon to vote against the resolution or particularly, after we have the bill and have the information, to vote against the bill because of that one matter."

This is the argument which was advanced in 1953 by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre. The argument was well put, as it was well put today by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre and others. I said that I would not want to go into the details of the few precedents I have before me of more

recent vintage. However, reference was made to the Veterans Benefit Act of 1954, and again the same argument was made by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre. Then jumping a decade or so we go to 1964, when the late, respected and beloved then Member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, the Honourable George C. Nowlan, raised the same point. He said, as reported at page 9086 of *Hansard* for October 15 of that year: "As the Minister has told us, we are dealing here with the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act, the Foreign Insurance Companies Act, the Trust Companies Act and the Loan Companies Act. Quite a mélange."

Perhaps honourable Members might have wanted to say the same thing about the bill now before the House. There is no question, without going further into the details, that this is a long established practice. We have had this type of omnibus bill before the House on many occasions. The President of the Privy Council and the Minister of Agriculture have quite rightly argued their case that this is long established practice and that the government has followed past practice. That is their argument and it has to be respected. Certainly the Chair must take that into account because of the importance of the precedent in our system.

However, where do we stop? Where is the point of no return? The honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre, and I believe the honourable Member for Edmonton West, said that we might reach the point where we would have only one bill, a bill at the start of the session for the improvement of the quality of life in Canada which would include every single proposed piece of legislation for the session. That would be an omnibus bill with a capital "O" and a capital "B". But would it be acceptable legislation? There must be a point where we go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint.

At the same time, having now reached second reading and having had this bill before us for some time, I doubt whether we should take the very drastic and extreme position, as I suggest to honourable Members it would be, of saying that this bill is not acceptable to the House, that it should not be put by the government and that it should not be considered by honourable Members. In my view it should be the responsibility of the Chair, when such bill is introduced and given first reading, to take the initiative and raise the matter for the consideration of the House by way of a point of order, as I have taken the liberty of doing with a number of Private Members' Bills. When those bills came before the House for first reading I entered a *caveat* about them and gave honourable Members an opportunity of expressing their views. At any rate some of these bills were refused by the Chair.

At the same point it is much easier for the government to go back to the legislative mill to where bills are prepared, to the judicial luminaries of the Department of Justice for the consideration of Parliament. If I may say so, I think that even those very learned gentlemen should take into account that this is an