

Dominion-Provincial Relations

May I say first that if the practice has been to allow a general debate on clause 1 of a bill, it is not strictly in accordance with the rules because the procedure is to study in committee the bill clause by clause only. Of course, as all hon. members know, discussion in committee has to be strictly relevant. Therefore this is a practice which has grown over the years, but it has been indicated in some instances that this discussion should be of a particular nature.

Hon. members will realize that it is easier to say what it cannot be than what it can be. First, it cannot be the same as that which took place on second reading because we have to apply the rule of strict relevancy as provided by standing order 59, paragraph 2. It may not be the same, either, as that which takes place in the normal way when we discuss the bill clause by clause, because then we would be repetitive. I may say that I would have to object to any comments which would normally be addressed to the discussion of a clause, and that is the view I took when the hon. member for Gatineau was speaking.

As to what exactly can be discussed on clause 1, when we have a discussion in general terms, I should think that the nature of the bill might change the possibilities. When it is a new act comprising several clauses, I should think discussion on the general bill in general terms could refer, for instance, to the format or plan of the act or its drafting. By these remarks I do not want to limit the discussion to these points; I am just giving an example. On the other hand, an amending act may sometimes not offer the possibility of a very wide discussion on clause 1. In the present case, to me the general discussion provided on clause 1 would be rather limited.

I have accorded some latitude up to now, but if the remarks are directed to the way the bill is drafted in a particular clause—reference to some terms in a particular clause—I would think those remarks should be made when we come to the clause in question; otherwise we would have repetition. It is not my intention to prevent free discussion of the bill but simply to have as orderly a discussion as possible.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Chairman, yesterday when I was discussing clause 1 I made a number of points. There was one, however, which I had not had the opportunity of making and I did not want to insist upon additional time for making it. Then I abided by the wish of the committee to retire after I was given the opportunity to say a few words in conclusion.

[The Chairman.]

I do want now at this stage to reiterate another point and at the same time make a new point dealing with clause 1. I think your ruling will allow me to do it, but before I proceed I should like to draw your attention to clause 6, subsection 3, of the tax rental agreement which is now under discussion under clause 1 of this bill and which in effect allows the minister, with the approval of the governor in council, to enter into an agreement amending or extending the terms and conditions. If one looks at clause 1 he will see that about the middle of the clause now under discussion and toward the end reference is made to a province:

—described in subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 9A,—

This therefore brings into operation the words that were discussed last evening such as “in the opinion of the minister” and “in accordance with the terms and conditions,” and so forth

I assure you, Mr. Chairman, I am not going to abuse that interpretation which I put on clause 1 because I do not intend to deal with the point I have in mind at any length, but I simply lay that as a basis to substantiate what I think is the position Your Honour took last evening and that which you are taking now.

The other matter which we on this side of the house feel is of great concern to us and which I am sure should be of concern to all hon. members of the committee but more particularly to hon. members from the province of Quebec is the attitude that is being taken or has been taken on this bill by the government of that province. Here I want to deal with the correspondence that was exchanged between the Prime Minister of Canada and the various premiers of the province of Quebec, correspondence which I say took some considerable time to be tabled because the notice of motion which I put on the order paper on a certain date was not returned until many months thereafter although I had on more than one occasion asked for the submission of the correspondence.

I believe this correspondence should be of great importance to the committee because neither in the correspondence nor any of the statements made did the Prime Minister of Canada at any time mention that the federal government would require that the arrangements between the province and the universities would have to be—and these words I place in quotation marks—“satisfactory in the opinion of the Minister of Finance,” and that they would have to comply with the terms of the agreement made between the Minister of Finance and the Canadian universities foundation.