

Employment Support Bill

gance, as if all governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and everywhere in the world were not arrogant. When the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) was the prime minister of Nova Scotia there were a few people who thought he was arrogant.

Mr. Stanfield: Oh, not very many.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, every government is subject to being called secretive, to being called arrogant because the pretense of being able to run a country is the very essence of arrogance. Mr. Speaker, give the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) a chance and he will even make a case for minority government. One can make any case if one is as eloquent as the hon. member for Waterloo.

The motion suggested by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) would impose an obligation on the government to obtain the anticipatory consent of parliament to the text of any regulations before they were proclaimed. The members talked about the government asking in this bill for a blank cheque. In some ways, Mr. Speaker, each piece of legislation is a blank cheque—

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Oh no.

Mr. Pepin: Yes it is, in the sense—

Mr. Stanfield: Some are blanker than others.

Mr. Pepin: Yes, some are blanker than others indeed, but I mean in the sense that it gives the right to the government to do whatever is approved in the law. So, it is a blank cheque to do what is permissible, not a blank cheque to do anything.

Mr. Baldwin: Then, how about the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act?

Mr. Pepin: If hon. members are not pleased with what the government is going to do about Bill C-262, they can vote against it. That is one possible way. And, as the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) said, they can criticize the government, ask questions, and bring down the government on a vote of non-confidence. There is more than one way to skin a minister, and more than one way to skin a government, and all these ways are available to the opposition. If they have not made good use of these means, that is their problem. It shows they are a poor opposition, but they should not accuse the system for not giving them the right to do what they should be doing.

• (5:10 p.m.)

This bill, from any point of view, is not different from all other bills. Somebody says that it was brought on the occasion of the surcharge. I will not deny that but this bill is of a permanent nature. It comes in to fill a hole, to cover a need for possible government action.

The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) indicated a number of situations that might arise. Indeed, a number of situations may. The hon. member for Edmonton West added to the list.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But you have to come and tell us about it. Why are you doing it?

[Mr. Pepin.]

Mr. Pepin: Can all situations be anticipated? Why would reference to the House not be requested for any other bill? Sending a man to prison for the rest of his life is a pretty dramatic gesture, too. Why would all life sentences under the criminal law not have to be approved by Parliament? Of course, I am exaggerating here to prove my point.

The hon. member for Edmonton West comes from Alberta. A number of decisions taken by the National Energy Board, for example, are subject to orders in council by the government with respect to the export of gas to the United States and with respect to the construction of oil pipelines. These are pretty important decisions. They can affect the whole economy of Alberta, the whole economy of Canada, and yet there is no obligation in the National Energy Board Act to bring this order in council back to the House for debate and approval by resolution.

Mr. Baldwin: There will be when this motion on the order paper is passed.

Mr. Pepin: On a post facto basis, not on an anticipatory basis.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): On this particular example, would the hon. minister permit a question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Pepin: Yes.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Does the minister know that there is not one cubic foot of gas that can be exported from Canada under a permit from the National Energy Board without permission first having been obtained from the Oil and Gas Conservation Board of Alberta which issues the original permit and looks after the province's rights in the first instance?

Mr. Pepin: No, on the contrary, the government would like to bring back to the House any new application of Bill C-262 for authorization by the House. What I am saying is simply that there is no such obligation in the National Energy Board Act and that decisions taken under that Act are as important as decisions taken under Bill C-262.

The member postulates that the government is going to be crooked, that the government is going to be dishonest, that the government is going to be secretive, that the government is going to be all these awful things. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is possibly a good debating point for opposition parties but this is not the basis on which government is conducted.

Mr. Baldwin: Have you not read the Statutory Instruments Act? Do you not know what that does to governments?

Mr. Pepin: My main point is really that decisions to bring in situations under this bill are indeed important. I am not saying anything contrary to that. They will be very important. What I am saying is that there are 10, 15, 20, 25 other bills where orders in council are important also that do not anticipate the procedure recommended in the motion procedure. I do find all kinds of things under the Import Export Permit Act if I were a crook but I am not doing them because these things are not done in a democratic parliamentary system. This would be against the purpose of the bill as expressed at one time in the past by