

private right is being taken away. It is up to Your Honour now to judge, but unless somebody can throw more light on the subject, in the face of my examination I cannot see how it could be concluded that there is a private aspect unless we were to change very greatly the procedures we have developed up to the present in the House of Commons.

• (4:30 p.m.)

I realize the precedents are skimpy, but there must be some special reason for having special procedures for private bills. I suggest the special reason for the special procedure is that previously existing or established special rights affecting special groups or special persons are involved, and the House must examine these in a particular way. That is why we have special procedures. If it should be decided that this is a hybrid bill, what would the Examiner of Petitions or the standing committee do with it? Who would appear? The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said all the people of Canada in a special assembly. This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the day. I think it explodes his argument because who would come to the committee to protect the public interest but the elected representatives, because this is a matter of public policy and affects the body politic as a whole.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I believe the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) seeks the floor for the purpose of asking a question.

Mr. Baldwin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the end of his statement the minister made a valid observation which worried me originally, until I saw the light. Perhaps, I might ask the minister a question. The minister talks about what rights may be affected. In the light of the fact that the Standing Orders mainly deal with private bills introduced on behalf of companies to be incorporated under the provisions of these rules, and in the light of the fact that hundreds of corporations have been affected by the provisions of these orders,—corporations which had no previous rights or existence before that—how does the minister reconcile his remarks about no private rights being affected with the fact that private corporations have been incorporated under private bills for decades with certain rights affecting certain individuals. That is the point I make and it is a case the minister has not met. That is why I ask the question.

Mr. MacEachen: I do not know whether I can give a very adequate answer. But when a private corporation petitions the House of Commons, presumably the petition is to create future special rights and special advantages that would accrue to that corporation itself.

Mr. Baldwin: As this bill does.

Mr. MacEachen: Who is petitioning here? This is one of the points raised in Erskine May's. How could the Crown petition the Crown? His Excellency really is recommending to the House of Commons on behalf of the Crown this measure, not a measure to create a private interest for the benefit of individuals or a special group or special corporation but is recommending to the House

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of Commons a measure which in the expectation of the government would have the effect of increasing the strength of the Canadianism of our economy.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is wrong.

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member may say we are not taking the right steps, as has been stated. But that is what the House is being asked to judge. It is not the creation of a special interest or privilege for anybody.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That is precisely what it is doing.

Mr. MacEachen: It is not. I suggest to my hon. friend that anybody can buy shares and we pass laws all the time affecting such groups.

Mr. Baldwin: Who else has the right to buy these four government companies?

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), and to hon. members, that we appear to be getting involved in the substance of the matter. I do not think this is what we should do at the stage of the proceedings. We should limit ourselves as much as possible to the procedural aspect of the matter. I believe the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) has a contribution to make to this debate, and we will hear him with pleasure.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), it would seem to me that he has hinged his entire argument on the question of private rights. If his case is to stand at all, he must make a case that private rights are not affected. I think he asked a rhetorical question which in a way deals with the matter of private rights, to which I want to refer. He asked who would come before the committee. I should like to suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the poor of Canada would come before the committee because the condition of all people is not alike.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not propose to interrupt the hon. member but I would bring to his attention that his argument comes very close to being a debate on the substance of the bill which is now before the House. I feel that the type of argument advanced by the hon. member, and perhaps to some extent on this particular point by the President of the Privy Council, is close to a substantive debate. I would invite the hon. member to limit his contribution as much as possible to the procedural aspect of the matter.

Mr. Saltsman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was coming to the procedural point. In order to say that no private rights are affected, I believe one would have to look at the Canadian population and assume that the same conditions exist for all. When you take property, which is now public property, and transfer it or indicate your intention to transfer it to a private corporation in which the general public can buy shares, that is well and good provided every member of the general public is in a position to buy shares in that corporation. This seems to