

Point of Order

• (1220)

This poses a dilemma. This, obviously, is an omnibus bill. It deals with employment and immigration, international peace and security, economic issues. It deals with ocean development. It refers to the Law Reform Commission and all of the work that that commission does, as well as the Science Council of Canada.

To proceed at this point, at second reading, obviously poses a serious dilemma. My hon. colleague has referred back. I will not refer to the references that he has quoted. I do not think it is necessary. I want to cast our minds back to that very critical debate in 1982 regarding energy policy.

There the position was made very clearly that unless we break up an omnibus bill of this nature and deal with the component parts independently and properly, this will set a very, very important precedent. If we are simply saying that in one bill you can deal with immigration issues, employment issues, ocean issues, science issues, economic issues and so on and so forth, are we not getting perilously close to the day when we simply say: "Here is the omnibus bill of the session of Parliament dealing with taxation, agriculture, forestry and a whole variety of areas. We will debate this one bill, and that will be it".

In other words, Parliament might last then for a whole session for a matter of hours or days, depending on the interest of the government in using closure.

I look across the aisle and I see the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader who I know, on balance, is a reasonable individual. I am sure he will participate in this debate. When the government introduced in the budget the fact that it was going to close these agencies—it is the right of the government to do that—we thought it was wrong-headed at the time and we still do. Again, this government has done a number of things. Most of the things it has done are wrong-headed in our estimation, but it has the right to do them. It indicated that it was going to close these government agencies.

Little did we ever anticipate that it would do this in one fell swoop. It minimized the debate. This is where I appeal to my hon. friend across the way, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader who knows how important it is that we debate issues thoroughly and properly in this House and that to do the job under the normal time allocations we have to debate issues. We know that his hon. friend, the House leader

for the government, is going to suggest that we deal with this within a day or two.

We are winding up some very critical agencies. If we are going to do that, the government ought to at least have the courage to debate openly the wisdom of winding up the Science Council of Canada. Scientists and others who are knowledgeable about the way the economy is going in the 1990s and toward the year 2000 tell us that science and science policy will play a critical role.

Is this the time to wrap up the Science Council of Canada? Is it the time to close down the Economic Council of Canada? The government says "yes". I suspect that unanimously, the opposition will say "no". That then, should be the basis of a thorough, open and complete debate.

We all know that this will not take place. If this omnibus bill is allowed to proceed as it is presently composed, that debate will not be forthcoming. It will be muzzled. There will not be adequate opportunity for people to participate in sharing their views on these critical areas.

I join with my friend, the House leader for the Official Opposition in saying that we too would support the notion of dividing up Bill C-63 to allow open, proper and complete debate on the winding up of these critical government agencies which we think is a serious departure in terms of past government policy. We feel that it deserves that type of open debate.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to basically add a few remarks in support of the point of order by the previous speakers. The budget, by way of an example that is useful, proposes to amalgamate two agencies called the External Review Committee of the RCMP and the RCMP Public Complaints Commission. To do that by way of an omnibus bill would really be a detrimental situation. The RCMP Public Complaints Commissions is an agency that has just commenced. It is an extremely busy agency. In the area I represent, it has had a large number of complaints put forward against a very small number of individuals. Yet those complaints are occurring across Canada. We have the situations of David Marshall, Wilson Nepoose and David Milgaard. We have had numerous examples of where the public must have access to the complaint system. There must be a mechanism to debate any of those changes in the RCMP Act in the House of Commons.