

dilemma for the Chair was that of Bill C-207, a bill which was obviously an omnibus bill.

I recognize that, having given the matter due consideration, the Chair took the position on that occasion that it could not direct the government to divide the bill. However, I believe there was a suggestion from the Chair that this kind of thing would need to be looked at more closely in the future. The same issue has been raised in connection with other bills this session. Though the position is not completely on all fours, I might perhaps mention the dollar items in the supplementary estimates a short while ago, because there is a certain parallelism. In that case, the Chair did rule that these items could not properly be embodied in the particular bill and they had to be taken out and covered by separate bills.

The last thing I would claim would be to assert, I am an expert on the bill before us. I suppose, Sir, you would join with me in a similar pretension of modesty. But it seems to me that the essence of the bill is to be found in the first 31 clauses, and perhaps in one or two clauses at the end. These relate to a clear proposition, namely the establishment of a stabilization fund, stabilization levies, a stabilization account and so on. Without going into the substance of the measure, I note it all hangs together: farmers are required to make certain payments, certain rules are laid down about the levying of those payments, and benefits are received under certain conditions.

Clause 32, on the other hand, does not involve the principle of payments on the basis of which one receives benefits. It refers rather to payments to be made in one specific year out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I submit it is a totally different proposition, and that it is quite improper to have these two totally different propositions combined in what we have to call one omnibus bill. So far as members are concerned, what bothers them most of all about this kind of thing—this is a complaint that we have made about most omnibus bills—is that they are called upon to vote for the bad because they want to vote for the good. I make no apology for complaining about that sort of situation. We had it last year with a bill that did something about pensions of retired civil servants and something about pensions of Members of Parliament as well. We were put on the spot, having to vote on “apples and carrots” at the same time.

● (4:20 p.m.)

Here again, we have two separate proposals. I heard no objection to my attempt to describe them. I repeat that the long term one is a kind of insurance scheme. You are required to make certain payments to establish certain benefit rights, and you get those benefit rights on the basis of what you have paid in. But tucked into the same bill is the special provision for one year which does not follow the rules of the general stabilization plan. I detect, certainly among members from western Canada, a keen desire to support the special transitional payments clause of this bill and to get it made law first.

Mr. Korchinski: Thatcher, bill 16.

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Someone makes reference to Thatcher, whoever he is, but that is beside the point.

Mr. Lang: It is a variety of wheat, Stanley.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Good humour aside, these two propositions are completely different. I also have the feeling that the omnibus character of this bill goes a step further. Clause 33 calls for the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. My special assistant on agriculture, the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), tells me that it has nothing to do with what is in the bill, that it has to do with storage and that sort of thing. Then, I look at clause 34 which seeks to amend the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. In that clause there is a kind of cross reference to the prairie farm emergency fund; but any proposal that alters or repeals parts of the Prairie Farm Assistance Act, which is a long term piece of legislation, should surely also stand on its own feet.

It may be that somebody can establish a relationship among these three or four provisions, but I submit their only real relationship is that they all deal with agriculture. This is the kind of problem that has arisen with other measures. For example, all the clauses of Bill C-207 had something to do with the government or aspects of government, but it was obviously a bag of many things, and that bill has not gone through yet simply because of the difficulty of dealing with an omnibus measure.

I have pressed my point in procedural terms. I have tried to reveal enough awareness of the substance of the bill to be able to talk about it; but as I say it strikes me it is quite unfair to face the House with a bill that has in it provisions that are totally different, particularly when we may be desirous of passing one of its provisions as it stands and the House may want to examine very carefully the other or long term provisions.

I think the Chair should consider giving the direction that this is another omnibus bill that ought not to be before us in this form but should be withdrawn and presented again as at least two bills, possibly as three.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the contentions made by hon. members on the point of order. I confess immediately that I am not an expert on the rules. I fully agree that up to clause 32, plus clauses 35, 36 and 37, the provisions are properly an item of legislation. In addition to the comments made on clause 32 I should like to add, in as reasoned and concise a manner as I can, that special transitional payments bear not the slightest resemblance of relation to what is envisaged in the main portion of the bill in regard to a Prairie grain stabilization fund.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has drawn into the discussion clause 32, and I defy anyone to tell me how the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act relate in any way, shape or form to the prairie grain stabilization proposals in the main portion of the bill. That Act has to do with storage paid on grain