

Mr. Mazankowski: Madam Speaker, I wonder if I—

Mr. Benjamin: A point of order.

Mr. Mazankowski: Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might defer to the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), the House Leader, who will be presenting general arguments on your ruling, including Motion No. 1. I hope I will have the opportunity to participate in the debate at a later time but I think it would be important to have him outline in a general the thrust of our arguments.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker—

Mr. Benjamin: A point of order—

Mr. Nielsen: I have had discussions with the Minister for the sake of order. Since I may agree with some of the arguments he presented to the Chair I should like to hear those, and it may cut down on the time necessary for my presentation and thus save the time of the House.

In the meantime, however, I wish to stake out a caveat with respect to Standing Order 75(10). I think the logic of the Chair is eminently reasonable and, to use the words of the Chair, I would suggest to Hon. Members that it would facilitate the procedural debate if the groupings outlined by the Chair were to be adopted.

My problem is that I have spent some five to six days preparing my arguments on the 174 amendments and they do not happen to fall into the groupings that the Chair would like to see. It would have been an excellent idea for me to proceed in that way but I only knew this morning that that was the suggestion of the Chair.

I would not want to think for a moment that Standing Order 75(10) would be applied to give the Chair the same discretion with respect to the grouping of amendments for procedural submissions as the power exists in the Chair for the grouping of amendments for purposes of debate. I notice that Madam Speaker nods her head in the negative but I should like to make my submission before the Chair comes to that conclusion.

I think the suggestion of the Chair is eminently reasonable—had I known of it in advance. I am sorry that I did not think of it myself; I should have, but I did not. My argument, which has taken several days to prepare, is not going to conform strictly to the suggestion of the Chair.

I would suggest that the Chair hear the Minister first with respect to the Government amendment, and I will listen very carefully to those arguments. If there is any way I can accommodate those arguments I shall do so. That will likely result in a more ordered procedural debate and perhaps will even cut down the time I need to present the rather lengthy procedural argument that I have.

Madam Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Member for Yukon if he could make an effort to proceed with his argumentation in the order of the groupings I have made. He will obviously recognize that many of these amendments have to do with the

Western Grain Transportation Act

same argument since some infringe upon the financial responsibility of the House, with the introduction of a preamble, with the scope of the Bill and against the principle—the arguments are the same.

I am sure that the Hon. Member, who has such a brilliant intellect, will re-organize that very, very quickly, and I hope he will do so.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

L'hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, we have no substantial objection to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy) defending his own amendments. Perhaps it would help shorten the procedural debate the Chair has allowed on the subject. Now, I do not intend to repeat the argument I made before: former Standing Order 75(10) is quite clear in that the Chair has discretionary power but, with due respect, I would say that it is limited. If former Standing Order 75(10) is interpreted literally only the member who gave notice of an amendment and no one else, can provide explanations. This Standing Order reads as follows:

(10) Mr. Speaker shall have power to . . . call upon any member who has given notice of an amendment to give such explanation of the subject of the amendment as may enable Mr. Speaker to form a judgment upon it.

A literal interpretation of the Standing Orders would mean that in theory, only such members who have given notice of an amendment can be heard or asked for explanations, if you so desire. It is in our view very generous of you to allow a debate which goes beyond the provisions of former Standing Order 75(10). We on this side of the House certainly do not want to take advantage of your generosity, but we have no objection to the Minister who moved these amendments wanting to provide some explanation or to you wanting to hear him. If this shortens the procedural debate on the part of the Opposition, all the better!

Madam Speaker: I simply want to remind the Hon. Minister that, more often than not, the Standing Orders are not interpreted literally. They are a guide. Some must of course be followed to the letter, but when a Standing Order provides some discretion, this discretion exists! In any case, I believe that these explanations which are being allowed will facilitate this debate.

● (1630)

[*English*]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the courtesy of the Chair and of the House Leader of the Conservative Party in allowing me to present our arguments first. I hope it is done for the sake of brevity. I would intend in my remarks, Madam Speaker, to speak to the rulings on three of the proposed Government amendments, Motions Nos. 14, 74 and 157, as put forward in the Order Paper. Also, for the sake of saving time, I would like