

Energy Security Act

can be confronted by the government with several different and disparate principles in one bill, and be asked to divide under the guise—simply because the bill has a long title—of dividing under one? If that is the case, the clarification we seek is, where is the principle?

● (1540)

If we go along with the conclusion that the Chair is not called upon to determine what the singular principle of the bill is, and we know we are confronted by the minister's own press release with seven different principles, we are, I submit, abandoning the practice of hundreds of years' standing.

We would like to know, Madam Speaker, whether your ruling means that we are now embarking upon an entirely different practice where, in the future, the House may be called upon legally by your ruling to divide, if they so choose, on several different principles under the guise of dividing under an omnibus bill, which by its very title sets out several different principles.

Madam Speaker: Well, obviously the meaning of the ruling I have just made—and the hon. member was debating the question—is precisely that I saw no reason for dividing the bill. I feel that the procedure which will apply to the study and eventual adoption, or otherwise, of that bill is a procedure we have followed in other circumstances. I have precisely said in my ruling that I felt this bill, as it is written, may be studied in the manner proposed. I am not introducing anything new. I have refrained from doing so because I have no precedent or rule on which to do other than what I have suggested in my ruling.

So I am not confusing the House by introducing new procedures. These procedures are well known to hon. members; they are ones which have been followed by the House in the past.

Mr. Nielsen: I have a further question for clarification, but the Chair has made the statement that I was debating the issue. It was certainly not my intention to reflect on the ruling of the Chair. I was legitimately and sincerely seeking guidance because of the Catch-22 situation we are in here.

One of the points raised with great clarity by the hon. member for Calgary Centre had to do with existing Standing Orders which require bills, on receiving approval in principle on second reading, to be referred automatically to standing committee. Now, we have four different and disparate bills by way of schedule which are now going to travel the Committee of the Whole route, thereby denying members of the House an in-depth inquiry by way of calling witnesses before the standing committee to inquire into the various clauses of the bill.

If I understand your ruling correctly, Madam Speaker, it means that those four schedules—in effect, four different statutes—will not go to standing committee but will remain in Committee of the Whole and thus deprive members of their normal rights. If I understand your ruling correctly, that is the result.

Madam Speaker: Well, the hon. member is again arguing the ruling and using the same arguments as the hon. member for Calgary Centre used the other day in his point of order. Those arguments were considered, and the ruling I just made answered those arguments. If the hon. member looks at the intervention of the hon. member for Calgary Centre, which intervention was most complete, he will find that the hon. member argued those points which the hon. member for Yukon is arguing over again.

I do not mind questions as to what may now happen in the House, but certainly the hon. member has to realize that he is not accepting the ruling and does not want to proceed as the ruling now determines the House should proceed. I am afraid I have to ask him to accept it, because that is the purport of the ruling.

The hon. member refers to the schedules, and he knows the hon. member for Calgary Centre spoke about the schedules and referred to the fact that there were four different principles or ideas, and so on, in those schedules. I dealt with that in my ruling.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, let me point out at the outset that this is the second time the Chair has made the observation that I am arguing with the ruling of the Chair. I am not arguing the ruling of the Chair, however much you, Madam Speaker, may think so. If I have left that impression, I want the Chair to dismiss it from her mind. I am simply seeking clarification. I know quite well that the hon. member for Calgary Centre made these arguments. I have not only read them, I have studied them, Madam Speaker, and I am quite aware of what they say. The reason I raise these questions for clarification now is precisely because the Chair, with great respect, did not deal in the ruling with the several points made by the hon. member for Calgary Centre. That is why I raised the points for clarification.

Now, had the Chair dealt seriatim with the six points raised by the hon. member—and I was following very carefully the ruling of the Chair to see whether each of those arguments was met—then I would not be standing here. I am standing here because, with great respect, we are left in this quandary by virtue of the fact that these several points raised by the hon. member for Calgary Centre have not been dealt with.

For instance, in regard to the point on the principle, which I will leave aside because I raised it a moment ago, the Chair did not give a response in detail to that argument. The one I am dealing with now with respect to the denial of our normal rights under the Standing Orders had the bill gone to standing committee as it ordinarily would have has not been dealt with, unless it can be said to have been dealt with by the umbrella rejection of the hon. member's submission. With great respect, I would have expected the Chair to deal with each one of the points raised because all of them are very important points indeed.

Another one which has not been dealt with, with great respect, and without intending to reflect on the ruling of the Chair, is this question of the rights of members to divide on a