

Government Orders

already. I do not think there is anything unusual about lumping these together for the purposes of debate. The hon. member suggests they are totally disjointed and I suggest they are not. They are part of the overall economic plan of the government as announced in the budget.

There are many different acts involved in terms of amendments because of the freezes imposed on various parts of the public service, including members of Parliament, judges and so on. All those amendments to the various acts that are involved in those freezes are part of an overall freeze on payments made by the government.

Similarly the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act fall into the same arrangement. The changes with respect to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation deal with freezes that were put in place in previous legislation and previous budgets and allow for some borrowing authority.

While the subject matter may be diverse, I suggest to the hon. member that given the fact they were all introduced in the budget, they form a whole, unified policy thrust which the government has put forward and which it will be defending in the course of the debate on this bill. Therefore in my submission, the bill is entirely in order.

In support of my position I refer to Beauchesne's, sixth edition, citation 634. I recognize the hon. member for Calgary West quoted a citation from Beauchesne's and quoted from a ruling of the Speaker in 1971 which is quoted in citation 634 of Beauchesne's. Notwithstanding his very able argument, I think he has missed the point. Citation 634 reads:

Speakers have expressed deep concern about the use of omnibus bills, and have suggested that there must be "a point where we go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint". Nevertheless, the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related subjects, while a matter of concern, is an issue on which the Speaker will not intervene to divide the bill.

• (1015)

I do not know what the hon. member is asking, if he is asking Your Honour to divide this bill or not. The authority in Beauchesne seems to be that the Speaker will not intervene to do that. I suspect he is really raising this matter this morning as a bit of a red herring.

I point out citation 635 of Beauchesne sixth edition. It says:

In the case of an omnibus bill, the Speaker has encouraged the use of motions to delete a clause at the report stage, pursuant to Standing Order 76(2) to permit the House to decide a specific issue contained in an omnibus bill, even though the motion might offend the principle of the bill.

If the hon. member genuinely believes that this is an omnibus bill that involves too many subjects for him to deal with in the

committee or for the committee to deal with in a reasonable way, he has a remedy. He may propose amendments at the report stage to delete sections of the bill that would constitute obviously a one policy thrust if indeed he regards this as a series of different policy thrusts and have the House make a decision on that at report stage.

I suggest that is a fair and reasonable remedy, certainly in this situation. I do not think this falls in the category of a bill that deals with a host of subjects that are massive in their import. This is a relatively modest bill by any standard. As I have indicated it follows from a major policy thrust, namely this year's annual budget from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I want to add very briefly a few points to what has been raised by my colleague the parliamentary secretary.

The member across the way invoked the fact, and I believe I am quoting him accurately, when he said: "We may be in favour of some articles and against others". That is precisely why committees of Parliament exist. Clauses can be deleted from the bill at committee.

There is a second remedy as well as was quoted by my colleague the parliamentary secretary for those members who do not sit on a particular committee. Of course that is the report stage of the bill where motions can be introduced to delete sections of the bill.

Finally, the member opposite indicated something to the effect that the bill was disjointed or did not fit the criteria of omnibus bills. He indicated that the subjects were diverse.

If that argument stands then surely it should have been made on the budget itself. After all this is a bill to implement the budget. If the bill has that disjointed characteristic that was ascribed to it by the member opposite, surely the argument would have also stood for the ways and means motion that was debated in the House and the budget itself.

If that was not true or if it was not invoked at those stages, and it has not been invoked since the bill in question was introduced on March 16, may I suggest that the argument has no more value today.

Perhaps I could add one last point. The Speaker ruled in the last Parliament that a bill which was far more comprehensive than this one, this bill only having some 20 pages, was not deemed to be offensive and against rule 634 of Beauchesne. That bill was at least 10 times the size of the one that we have now. If a bill 10 times the size was not deemed to be so omnibus that it offended this House, surely a bill one tenth the size of the previous one would not be any more offensive.