

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

form which might have been acceptable to a Speaker generations ago.

In his amendment the hon. member for Saskatoon is suggesting that there should be a condition attached to the second reading of this bill. Instead of saying, as has been the custom in the past, that the bill be not now read a second time and that the subject matter be referred to a committee, he is saying that the bill be not read a second time until this condition has been fulfilled. In each case precisely the same result would be achieved. Since hon. members on this side, and I assume many other hon. members, feel that a real issue has arisen which should be considered in view of the fact that it arose since the bill first was presented for second reading, we believe hon. members should have the right, either by themselves if they are not members of the committee or through their colleagues who are members of the committee, to make a thorough and searching inquiry into certain aspects of the bill.

Unfortunately, as we all know, too often it becomes necessary for members of the opposition to move a motion of this type because they seek valid and important information before being placed in the position where they must vote either yea or nay on a bill of this kind. This is precisely the reason we are doing this today. I should like to say that originally, upon reading the bill and listening to the presentations of the first several hon. members who spoke, I felt that in committee of the whole I would have an opportunity to discuss the many specific aspects of the bill. I could see no valid objection to the broad principle that there should be a continuation of the private and public sectors and that there should be a regulatory board which would have certain rights with regard to both the public and private sectors. Now, however, because of what has arisen over the week end I am in the position, as I am sure many other members of the house are, that I should like to know, before I am called upon to vote yea or nay on second reading, what the facts are which have been the subject of this controversy. Because of what has occurred there may be clauses in this bill to which we would take serious objection.

The hon. member for Saskatoon in his very thorough and articulate contribution has outlined the views of this party in this regard. In addition, I am giving my own view. Despite the interpretation which may have been placed upon the general rules, conditions and precedents of the past, I urge Your Honour to bear in mind that through

this motion we seek not to kill this bill but rather to have before the second reading stage the type of examination which the circumstances now make inevitable and imperative. Although there is no real difference between the words "that this bill be not now read a second time and the subject matter be referred to a committee" and the words "that this bill be not read a second time until the subject matter has been referred to a committee", we believe that the second version more clearly and precisely indicates the purview of this party. Surely it should be the right of a party or an individual to move an amendment which corresponds to the point of view he is attempting to place before the house.

• (5:30 p.m.)

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I find myself in large measure in agreement with the very laudable points the hon. member for Peace River has drawn to the attention of the house. However, I think he overlooked one very important consideration. Everything he wants members to have the privilege of doing by way of amending the bill, changing it or improving it, if that is their point of view, can be done in committee of the whole house or, indeed, can be done if the house decides to refer this bill to the standing committee after it has received second reading. In the meantime we have the rules of this house and precedents which, until they are changed, we are obliged to follow.

Let me also say to the hon. member for Peace River that while there are some changes which may be new in dealing with bills of this type on second reading, I am sure Your Honour and the hon. member are aware of the substantial reasons for having the house accept a bill in principle before amendments are made and before it is referred to a committee. Unless the house has given approval in principle there is really no determination that it wishes either a standing committee or the committee of the whole to give further consideration to the bill's specific provisions.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question in relation to the statement he has just made?

Mr. Olson: Not at this moment, Mr. Speaker. I should like to refer Your Honour to citation 386 of Beauchesne, fourth edition,