

MR. McDERMID—FAILURE TO DISTRIBUTE PRESS RELEASE

Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown): Madam Speaker, I have given notice of a question of privilege, and I will be brief. It arises out of an incident which took place toward the end of last week but came to my attention early this morning. It pertains to material being distributed to Members of Parliament through the distribution service of the House of Commons.

In the past, material has been presented by various organizations that wish to make representations and to pass on certain information to Members of Parliament. As is required, they provide certain quantities of French and English versions of the information to the post office or the distribution centre. Over the past number of years releases have been distributed to Members of Parliament.

Last Friday a press release was distributed by the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association, as has been done many times for many years. We have all received such releases through the distribution service. Mr. Richard Mallette, who identified himself as a supervisor for the House of Commons post office, made the decision to censor the material and refused to distribute it to Members of Parliament. The particular press release concerned the firing of Mr. Neil Fraser. Because this has caused so much controversy in the last while, and because air traffic controllers have always been able to distribute press releases in the past, whether or not they criticize the government—most of them were critical of the government—I feel the supervisor in the House of Commons post office does not in fact have the right to go through this material and to make a decision on what material should or should not be distributed to Members of Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am somewhat uneasy about having the conduct of members of the staff of the House of Commons discussed in the House. I would rather think that this is a matter of management, which is under my jurisdiction. I would prefer the hon. member to come and see me with his complaint. I will investigate it to see whether he has been deprived of privileges which he should enjoy as they relate to services provided by the House of Commons. Obviously he knows it is not a question of privilege or a point of order. I suggest that this matter would be better settled if he came to see me, made his complaint, and then I investigated the matter.

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ENERGY SECURITY ACT, 1982

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

On the Order: Government Bills (Commons):

Second reading and reference to a Committee of the Whole of Bill C-94, An Act to amend and enact provisions related to the Petroleum Administration Act, the National Energy Board Act, the Foreign Investment Review Act, the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Petro-Canada Act, the Energy Supplies Emergency Act, 1979 and the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act; to repeal the Energy Supplies Emergency Act; to amend an act to amend the Petroleum Administration Act and the Energy Supplies Emergency Act; to amend the Adjustment of Accounts Act; and to enact the Petroleum Incentives Program

Point of Order—Mr. Andre

Act, the Canadian Ownership and Control Determination Act, the Energy Monitoring Act and the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act.—*The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.*

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order respecting Bill C-94 which I mentioned to the Chair last Thursday. The bill was given first reading last Friday and I have had the weekend to look at it.

● (1540)

In my view, this Energy Security Act, Bill C-94, is plainly and simply out of order. Standing Order 69 states:

No bill may be introduced either in blank or in an imperfect shape.

“Shape”, according to the Oxford Concise Dictionary, is a synonym for “form”. Therefore, a bill according to Standing Order 69 must not be in imperfect form. The question of a bill’s form is extensively dealt with in our parliamentary authorities, such as Beauschene and Erskine May, and I will show that the energy security bill violates not just one but several requirements as to form. To be precise, six requirements.

The title of the energy security bill is as follows:

An act to amend and enact provisions related to the Petroleum Administration Act, the National Energy Board Act, the Foreign Investment Review Act, the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Petro-Canada Act, the Energy Supplies Emergency Act, 1979 and the Oil Substitution and Conservation Act; to repeal the Energy Supplies Emergency Act; to amend an Act to amend the Petroleum Administration Act and the Energy Supplies Emergency Act; to amend the Adjustment of Accounts Act; and to enact the Petroleum Incentives Program Act, the Canadian Ownership and Control Determination Act, the Energy Monitoring Act and the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act.

That is the title of an omnibus bill with a capital “O” and a capital “B”. Indeed, I would argue that it would be more accurately described as an “omnifarious” bill, meaning of all sorts, or perhaps an “omnific” bill, meaning all-creating. Certainly there has never before in the history of Parliament been included in one proposed bill such an incredible hodge-podge and mish-mash of such disparate items.

The Chair is well aware that the question of omnibus bills has been raised in this House on several occasions in the past. Various Speakers, including yourself, Madam Speaker, have made rulings on this question, but I will argue that Bill C-94 goes far beyond anything previously introduced in this House, far beyond anything on which Speakers have heretofore been requested to rule.

On the general question of omnibus bills, I would like to refer the Chair to the very excellent ruling made by your predecessor, the Hon. Lucien Lamoureux, as reported in the House of Commons *Journals* for January 26, 1971, at page 284. Commenting on the fact that omnibus bills had been introduced in the House of Commons in the past, he went on to say:

However, where do we stop? Where is the point of no return? The honourable member for Winnipeg North Centre, and I believe the honourable member for Edmonton West, said that we might reach the point where we would have only one bill, a bill at the start of the session for the improvement of the quality of life in Canada which would include every single proposed piece of legislation for the