

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

an omnibus Bill. In fact, there is no precedent of an omnibus Bill being thrown out. We submit that there is a difference between this Bill and the energy security Bill.

Having said that, I urge a good, solid procedural argument on all aspects of the Bill immediately, in order that we can have Your Honour's decision on its acceptability and then move on, as my friend from Windsor West invited us, to debate the issue. Surely Canadians want us to debate the issue of free trade.

We must allow for procedural argument, and that is why we initiated this way of dealing with it. This is the first time, in my experience, that it has been done this way. We brought it forward and said that we were not going to call it *per se* but were inviting procedural argument, which we hope can be packaged into today. Then Your Honour can reflect upon the arguments of my colleagues opposite and the arguments of the Government and decide. Pending approval, we can then proceed to the debate on the substance, which we are more than ready to do. We think Canadian people want us to get on with it.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I doubt that I can raise a point of order at this stage, but I want to remind the Deputy Government House Leader that in opening my remarks I specifically said that I had a number of points of order relating to Bill C-130 but that, in the interest of orderly discussion, I intended to limit my remarks at that time to the matter of whether the Bill was an omnibus Bill of an improper nature. I reserved the right to argue the constitutional issue and some other issues at a later stage.

I hope it will not be taken that, because I did not include any comments on other matters that I consider to be relevant to whether or not the Bill is in order, I had waived my rights to raise them at the proper time.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to assure the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) that the Chair certainly did not take it that he had waived any of his rights. Hon. Members will remember that in his opening remarks he made it very clear that there are some other matters which he wants to bring to the attention of the Chair, although I do not think he necessarily set them all out at that time.

With respect to the comments of the Hon. Minister of State respecting the fact that he is prepared to argue constitutionality and perhaps some other matters at a later date, I think the appropriate thing at the moment is for the Chair to keep that in mind and to carry on with any further argument on the matters which have been raised, attacking the Bill in its omnibus form.

I think the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) indicated to the Chair that he would like to intervene. I will hear the Hon. Member and then proceed to some other Hon. Members.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understood that the point of order which was raised just after Routine Proceedings by the House Leader of the Official Opposition was a point of order on whether or not the Bill was acceptable, whether it was admissible. Members may have different reasons for believing it not to be admissible, but it is my sense that as Members rise they should deal with the aspect of admissibility.

I heard the cautions, but surely all the arguments about admissibility will be made in the course of the process we are into in order that you, Sir, can reach a decision about admissibility. Surely we are not going to have a ruling on whether each individual piece has a relevance for admissibility. The House needs a procedural decision about the admissibility of the Bill in order that we can get on with the debate. If Members have arguments, they may choose to put them in series or at different points in time, but surely—

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I did not mean to cut off the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary. I do not think he had concluded.

Mr. Hawkes: I would like clarity on whether or not the arguments that we are all making here today are about the procedural admissibility of the Bill. Is it a Bill which the House should debate? If Members have different reasons for believing it should not be, or Members have different reasons for believing it should be, they have an obligation to put those as early as possible in the process, in order that you are in a position to make the basic ruling about the point of order on whether or not the Bill should go forward and be debated.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary who I think has appropriately addressed something to which we must, of course, pay some attention. However, at the moment I take it that there may be some further argument. I think that has been indicated, not only by the Hon. Member for Windsor West but also by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary. It may be that at some later stage I may have to make an indication about whether or not a line of argument is even appropriate.

• (1250)

Perhaps we might be into a subject which is not for the Chair to decide. However, I think I will leave that until I hear what further points may arise.

It may well be that there is no particular need to argue further points after we get through this round, but I want the Hon. Member for Windsor West and others to know that I am conscious of the fact that Hon. Members may raise some other matters with me.

Returning to the point the Parliamentary Secretary makes, which is very important to the Chair, for now at least I want to hear arguments, both for and against, on the issue of whether or not it is appropriate for me to allow the Bill to be before the House. Of course, that is a very important matter for the Chair and for the House.