

has had the opportunity to do so without any intervention from the Chair. I think that in all fairness, the hon. member for Abitibi should enjoy the same privilege. The House will be interested in hearing him, I am sure; but if hon. members agree with me, after having heard the hon. member for Abitibi, I will give hon. members an opportunity to hear my own views in this connection

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend speaking at length on this matter. I know that many things have been said for and against omnibus bills. As far as I am concerned, I am opposed to this type of proceeding which places members in rather tricky situations. One part of an omnibus bill may be easily acceptable to us while another may leave doubts in our minds.

We can recall the omnibus bill to amend the Criminal Code and also a similar bill introduced in 1966 or 1967 concerning an increase in old age security pensions from \$65 to \$75. Everyone agreed on this point, but the bill also included a provision to increase taxes in order to replenish the old age security fund, which many opposed. It was therefore necessary to approve or reject both provisions as a whole. In consequence our position was untenable.

According to the government, this type of bill is introduced in order to facilitate consideration of it. I suggest that it is not so. If the bill on government re-organization had been studied in stages, if the case of each department had been examined, it could have been determined which ones need to be organized or re-organized. Certain provisions could have been adopted in five minutes, ten at the most. For the others, a little more time would have been needed, but on the whole all members would have been able to express their views on each provision, and that is not the case now.

I believe that the government should stop introducing bills of this sort and should instead submit very specific bills so that we may express our views clearly and frankly.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) as well as his colleagues who have wanted to make their views known and thus enable the Chair to benefit from their long experience in order to make a decision and to humbly express its opinion on the matter.

[English]

The point raised by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) is one of very great importance. I think I may say that when this bill was introduced in the House and given first reading, I raised my eyebrows and wondered whether the established procedures were being followed. Because of that, I have been thinking about the situation, and even before the point was raised by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants I gave the matter serious thought wondering whether we were proceeding in the right direction.

There is no doubt in my mind that there is considerable substance in the point raised by the hon. member in the first instance. I am also quite impressed by the argu-

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ment advanced by other hon. members in support of his objection. I think that, in a way, he has a legitimate grievance or complaint.

My problem is, of course, whether he can advance a legitimate procedural argument, and this is where I find some difficulty. As the House knows, the Chair has to be guided to a considerable extent by precedents established over a number of years. During the hour or so this debate has been going on, the learned gentlemen at the table have obtained for me, at my request, certain precedents showing that similar points have been raised in the past. This is not the first time we have had before us a measure of the kind which have been called omnibus bills. On many occasions objections have been raised very strongly by hon. members. I would not like to go into all the details but, briefly, if hon. members will allow me, on April 2, 1953 the House had before it an amendment to the National Defence Act. Mr. Brown of St. John's West raised the point:

I have no doubt the minister can explain why this resolution covers two or three acts. Is it customary to do that?

As members will see, the point was being raised in 1953, and I am sure it was raised even before that. The Minister of National Defence at that time, Mr. Brooke Claxton, claimed that this was what had been done in the past and, as was done today, suggested this had long been the practice of the House. In any event, nothing was done, and the bill was presented to the House unchanged. It was voted upon in its original form.

The question was brought up again; the same bill was subjected to the same objection. The objection of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was reported at length in *Hansard* on December 10, 1953, at page 797. His words are preserved there for posterity and perhaps I should repeat them for the benefit of double posterity, if that exists.

This procedure places the members of the house in the situation of being faced with a resolution which deals with eight different matters. Naturally there are eight different principles involved under ordinary circumstances. As far as I can see from casual examination, most of these things are matters which perhaps everyone in the committee would agree with. When we hear more about them, that may not be so. In any event, it might very well be that amongst those eight amendments is one with which we would disagree violently and therefore feel called upon to vote against the resolution or particularly, after we have the bill and have the information, to vote against the bill because of that one matter.

This is the argument which was advanced in 1953 by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Well put!

Mr. Speaker: The argument was well put, as it was well put today by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and others. I said that I did not want to go into the details of the few precedents I have before me of more recent vintage. However, reference was made to the Veterans Benefit Act of 1954, and again the same argument was made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Then, jumping a decade or so we go to 1964, when the late, respected and beloved member for Digby-