

Private Bills

arisen before in the house. Hon. members will recall that there were two bills dealing with the printing of negotiable securities in French, and that debate on one of them was refused pending the disposition of the other on the grounds that the house will not enter into a discussion of identical subjects under two categories.

Farther on you mention the fact that both bills were concerned with a method of selecting a flag. I raise the point of order, Mr. Speaker, so that we may be sure of the conduct of our business here, and I think a ruling will be required in this instance. Whereas in the last session it was definitely determined that the two bills dealing with the printing of negotiable securities should not be considered in the same session without a determination on one, here we have a similar situation with two bills dealing with the authorization of a Canadian flag. The debate on one was started and not concluded. The house has not expressed its opinion on that subject. The second bill was introduced today and, although phrased in different language, actually deals with the same subject matter since it asks the house to express its opinion on the question of authorizing us to select a Canadian flag. For the second time this session, therefore, the debate will be on the same subject matter and it may or may not be resolved today, if you should decide that the debate should continue. If it is resolved today, what then happens to the earlier bill? If it is not resolved, on a subsequent occasion we will have two bills on the order paper, as we have now, dealing with the same subject matter.

It is in order that we shall not, by inattention or by inadvertence, establish a precedent which we might find unsatisfactory in the future that I draw to Your Honour's attention this situation.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the point which has been raised by the house leader is not well taken. The rule which has been read as citation 200, page 167 of Beauchesne's fourth edition, suggests that not more than one question should be before the house at the same time. I think what Your Honour would want guidance upon, if Your Honour wants guidance on this matter, would be what is meant by one question. My contention is that the questions that have been before the house earlier are not the same as the question that is now before the house.

I should like to explain what I mean by that. The first matter that came before the house was Bill No. C-8, an act to authorize a Canadian flag. That bill was brought to the attention of the house by the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Smith). All we need to do is to read clause 1 of that bill in order to come to the conclusion immediately that it

deals with an entirely different subject matter from that which is now before the house. Not only is the phraseology of clause 1 entirely different but the subject matter is entirely different, although the title is "Flags of Canada".

The second matter that came before the house was by way of a resolution introduced by the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier). He suggested a plebiscite on two alternatives, something which I respectfully submit is not the same question as that which is now before us.

Then at a later date we had discussion of Bill No. C-60, an act to amend the Statistics Act, to provide that a matter of this kind be considered as a question in the forthcoming census.

This matter now brought forward by the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska (Mr. Boulanger), although entitled "An Act respecting flags of Canada", provides that the design is one which should be selected by the governor in council. When one comes to the actual meaning of the rule he finds, as I understand it, that the word "question" as it applies to these three bills and one resolution is directed toward entirely different matters.

A moment ago the house leader said that this was the second time the matter had come up for consideration this session. It is the third time. I am sure that the house leader forgot—or that the matter was not brought to his attention—the bill discussed by the hon. member for Lincoln. Then there was the resolution of the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier). There was the discussion of the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville. Then there is this one.

The point that I am trying to make is that when Your Honour asked for guidance on the resolution because of the points raised by the house leader I think Your Honour was then satisfied that this was a matter which should be allowed to be pursued. It strikes me that if objection was going to be taken against this procedure it should have been taken long ago. If the point made by the house leader is a sound one, then the objection should have been taken on the second bill or the second resolution that came up for discussion, and that was many weeks ago. Objection was not taken then. There was a third one and no objection was taken. Now there is this one on which discussion is allowed to go on for 30 minutes or more and then objection is taken. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the question under discussion is entirely different from those questions that were under discussion in the earlier bills and resolutions.

[Mr. Churchill.]