HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 6, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

POSITION ON ORDER PAPER OF MOTIONS FOR CONCURRENCE IN SIXTH REPORT OF MISCELLANEOUS ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), filed a notice of motion in these terms:

That the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, presented to the House on Wednesday, December 5, 1973, be concurred in.

I may point out that the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) filed precisely the same motion.

My point of order relates to the position these two motions have been assigned for the order paper. As of today they are simply on the notice paper, but the notice paper indicates where they will be when they are transferred tomorrow to the order paper.

Their position on the notice paper indicates that they will be listed for debate on Monday next under motions made pursuant to Standing Order 58(4)(a). As everyone knows, Monday next is to be an allotted day on which it is thought there might be a non-confidence motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

My contention is that, since these two identical motions relate to the adoption of a report of a standing committee, they should appear on the order paper under Routine Proceedings in the same place where half a dozen or more similar motions are already listed. Some of them have been standing for quite a while. There is one in the name of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald), one in the name of the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), and several more.

My point is that the motions filed yesterday for concurrence in the report of the standing committee should be given treatment identical with that given to other such motions. I suspect the reason the Chair and the Table have put these motions where they are is because of Standing Order 58(16) which reads as follows:

There shall be no debate on any motion to concur in the report of any standing committee on estimates which have been referred to it except on an allotted day.

I have to point out that the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates is not, strictly speaking, in fact in any terms, a report on estimates themselves. Rather, it is a report on a matter that arose in that committee out of consideration of the estimates. Just to identify it so that we will know what we are talking about, the actual report contains a recommendation that matters having to do with the administration of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, including in particular the dismissal of Mr. Rudnicki, should become the subject matter of a reference by the House to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs. That is a recommendation made to the House arising out of consideration of estimates that were referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, but in no sense is it a report by the standing committee on the estimates.

I can tell by that winsome smile on Your Honour's face that you are ready to tell me the report is out of court on another basis. That, of course, is a separate issue. I am not now arguing the question whether the report itself is in order. I am contending that the place where the motion should have been set out is where other motions for concurrence in reports of standing committees appear, namely, under Daily Routine of Business.

• (1410)

Your Honour might ask what is the difference, since the motion of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby or the identical motion of the hon. member for Calgary North will be reached in due course. I point out that if these motions appear under Daily Routine of Business it would be the prerogative of either of these hon. members, any day on motions, to ask the House to proceed thereon. But if those motions appear under the item of an allotted day one is faced with the fact that on the next allotted day, namely, Monday, December 10, a non-confidence motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition may be filed.

Since Your Honour has the responsibility, when several motions are set down for the same day, to decide which shall take priority, if you have to choose among motions proposed by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, the hon. member for Calgary North and the Leader of the Opposition one can imagine which one you would feel should be given priority. In such circumstances the motions in the names of the hon. member for Calgary North and the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby would never be reached at all. If they were placed under Routine Proceedings, at least one or the other of the two members I have named would be able to move concurrence in his motion and, thereby, concurrence in the report.

I realize there are arguments about the validity of the report. It seems to me a case could be made for the right of a committee dealing with estimates which have been referred to it to make a recommendation about a matter arising from those estimates. This, indeed, is what happened in the committee. There was a discussion of the estimates of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and particularly with regard to the dismissal of Mr. Rudnicki, resulting in this recommendation that the whole matter be referred by the House to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, the committee to which housing matters are normally referred.