

Dominion-Provincial Relations

not think that the decision could apply in the case of the hon. member for Richelieu-Vercheres (Mr. Cardin).

(Text):

Mr. Crestohl: On the point of order which you have raised, Mr. Chairman, may I draw to your attention something which, perhaps, you are overlooking in subsection 2 of standing order 59, on which you have relied a great deal. Let us read it slowly:

Speeches in committee of the whole house must be strictly relevant—

Relevant to what?

—to the item or clause under consideration.

There are two matters upon which the subsection says we must keep an eye with respect to relevancy. It does not say relevant only to a clause. If the subsection simply read that speeches must be relevant to the clause, then your rulings would be perfectly sound when we were dealing with a particular clause. However, the words in this subsection 2 say that speeches must be relevant to two things, to the item—and it does not say “and clause”, but it says “or clause”. You may draw a distinction. I submit very respectfully that the relevancy must be to an item or a clause.

I repeat, only for emphasis, that if we were dealing now with clause 2 or clause 3 of the bill, then under the rule of relevancy speeches should be relevant to that. However, the rule gives latitude and says speeches must be relevant to an item. What is the item we are now discussing? We are now discussing an item, clause 1, under which a general discussion is permitted. I respectfully submit for your consideration that you should put some interpretation on the wording of this rule of relevancy to the effect that relevancy can be with respect to an item, which is wider and gives greater latitude than a clause.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Surely, Mr. Chairman, this is the most preposterous argument that has ever been addressed to the chairman of a committee of this house.

Mr. Crestohl: It may seem preposterous to the minister.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): There is no item before the committee at this time. The standing order from which the hon. gentleman has read is one which binds committees of the house. Committees of the house address themselves to the clauses of a bill and items in the estimates. The rule is uniform. If the committee is dealing with estimates, discussion must be strictly relevant to the item under consideration. If the committee is dealing with a bill, then the discussion must be strictly relevant to the particular clause of the bill that is under discussion.

Mr. Chevrier: Not under clause 1 or item 1 of the estimates.

(Translation):

Mr. English: Mr. Chairman, I am not as experienced as the hon. member for Cartier (Mr. Crestohl), but I really think that we discussed the principle of the bill before its second reading. We now have to consider each clause of this bill and if the hon. members who had the opportunity of speaking during the debate on second reading start a new discussion on the principle of the bill, when clauses 1 and 2 are under consideration, we shall have to answer them and thus engage in an endless discussion.

(Text):

The Chairman: I have indicated before, and this is in reference to the remarks by the hon. member for Cartier, that if we were to apply the standing order strictly we could not even allow a debate in general terms on clause 1 because the rule is that when we study a bill in committee there is no other way of studying it except clause by clause. It is only the practice, therefore, that has allowed some latitude on clause 1, and because it is only the practice I think hon. members should restrain themselves as to the nature of the general discussion that they can proceed with under clause 1.

Now as to what is proper within the rule of strict relevancy and the practice which allows a general discussion, in my opinion, should be left to a great extent to the discretion of the Chair because otherwise it is not possible to conduct an orderly debate. I have up to now accorded great latitude to the hon. member for Laurier because he was making a point that he could not discuss under clause 1 without referring to clause 2. However, the hon. member for Richelieu-Vercheres is not even discussing the terms of the bill. He is discussing the history of university grants, and that is a proper subject for discussion on second reading. I certainly would not be applying the rules as they should be applied, or even the practice, if I were to allow the hon. member to continue this line of discussion.

Mr. Cardin: Mr. Chairman, you just mentioned that I was not discussing the terms of the bill. I understood that was exactly what I was not supposed to do, discuss the terms of the bill. What I was trying to do was to discuss the whole question of university grants. I must admit also that what inspired me to speak in this particular debate was the speech made by the Minister of Finance last night. I had no intention of participating in the debate until then.