

Government Organization Act, 1970

lines. I hope, when this kind of legislation is presented to the House in future, it will be necessary for it to fall within the ambit of certain guidelines. I hope Your Honour might be able to do this.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully to the arguments which have been advanced. It seems to me that the main burden of the argument that has been made is that members of the House must, when the Speaker is in the chair, be provided with an opportunity of voting, if not on all the details, at least on all the separate propositions contained within any bill. If that is valid, Mr. Speaker, then I suggest there is no purpose for the committee of the whole; and, if you want to take the argument to ridiculous lengths, there is probably no purpose for the standing committees of the House, either. If hon. members opposite wish to argue that all the details or different propositions of any bill must be the subject of a separate vote, with Mr. Speaker in the chair—I am not arguing as to the purpose for which members might wish to have their votes recorded—then, of course, there would be no reason for the committee to take under consideration bills of this nature, or any other nature.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it is competent for either standing committees of this House, or indeed, the committee of the whole of this House, to amend any clause of this or any other bill. To be more specific, Mr. Speaker, the amending capability enables such committees to delete completely any clause from this or any other bill. This has been the practice for a very long period of time, Mr. Speaker. So, when any member argues that he does not have an opportunity to disagree with this or that individual provision of this bill or indicate that he supports other parts of the bill, I submit that his argument is not valid.

Mr. Nesbitt: Nobody has argued that point.

Mr. Olson: I suggest, further, that every member of the House is also a member of the committee of the whole, and that the opportunity of disagreeing or agreeing is not denied to him. It is a novel argument, I suggest, that every disagreement with respect to certain provisions within a bill ought to be the subject of a recorded vote. The hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt) supports that argument. He says he wants to advise his constituents how he voted on any of the separate propositions of the bill.

Mr. Nesbitt: My constituents want to know how you vote. I do not know if that holds true for the minister's constituents.

Mr. Olson: That has not been the practice of this House, either in the committee of the whole or with regard to standing committees. Hon. members have known for a long time that the total numbers of those for or against a proposition only have been recorded.

Mr. Alexander: Could the minister elaborate on that point?

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

Mr. Olson: Citation 389 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition, page 279, reads in part:

A motion opposing the second reading of a Bill must not anticipate amendments which may be moved in Committee. Alterations which may be affected by amending the clauses of the Bill cannot be moved on the second reading.

I know that it is not intended to move amendments to the motion at present. I have quoted that citation only to give credence to our rules, and to the precedents for our rules, which provide that there is an opportunity in the committee of the whole and in standing committees for amendments of substance to be moved.

I think that if the arguments against our proceeding with the bill at this time hinge on the point that hon. members will not have an opportunity to vote on each separate proposition in the bill, I can only say that these arguments, if acceded to, would be a new departure and not in keeping with the practice over a long period.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, even though I have sat in the House for a limited time, I have the nerve to say that I listened with amazement to the minister who just spoke. My first experience with an omnibus bill was the bill dealing with the Criminal Code amendments relating to homosexuality, abortion and other matters. I listened to that debate in my early days in this House. I sat here perplexed and frustrated because the procedure leaves individual members, particularly on the opposition side, in a precarious position. I am not too interested in members sitting on the government side because I know how they think and how they vote.

● (3:50 p.m.)

An hon. Member: How do you know?

Mr. Alexander: I know because of the pattern of the record. I hope the minister is not trying to convince me that this procedure is correct and that it is, in truth, participatory democracy. A member on this side may be in favour of some parts of the bill and unalterably opposed to others. Nevertheless, to be credible and to show involvement in the work of the House he has to vote either directly for or against the bill as a whole. I do not want the minister to shake his head when he knows what happened in connection with that omnibus bill. I hope he is not serious when he says it does not really matter. It is one thing for people over there, where members are like sheep who follow a leader, and another thing for those who sit on opposition benches and wish to become involved with certain principles which they find either offensive or in keeping with their own ideas.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: I note that the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) wishes to take part in the debate. Evidently, I will allow him to do so, but I would suggest to hon. members that I have heard the argument for and against the point of procedure raised by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) a moment ago and I will soon be ready to make a ruling, taking into account all the points raised during the debate. Moreover, each of the members who wished to take part in the discussion