

Petitions

MR. BENJAMIN—RETENTION OF CROWSNEST PASS RATES

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege and the duty to present a petition to the House of Commons assembled by the undersigned residents of Canada from the towns of Beausejour, Swan River, Lac du Bonnet and Ottawa, some 36 names, who say that western Canadian farmers paid \$131 million to move export grain under the Crowsnest Pass freight rate. This grain in turn contributed \$6.3 billion to Canada—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the Hon. Member simply read the title of the petition and the prayer.

Mr. Benjamin: The undersigned believe that this is the farmers' fair contribution. Wherefore the undersigned will pay one times Crow and your petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to maintain the present statutory grain Crowsnest Pass rate. And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

MR. ANGUISH—CALL FOR PASSAGE OF BILL C-678

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to stand here today to present to the House of Commons a petition signed by residents of the Province of New Brunswick who support the passage of the Private Member's Bill standing in my name, Bill C-678, an Act to declare Canada a nuclear weapons free zone.

The petitioners believe that testing the Cruise missile in Canada escalates the nuclear arms race and is therefore a serious threat to the peace of the world. The petitioners stress that Canada has a traditional—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the Hon. Member resume his seat. I have to remind Hon. Members that what is allowed in the course of presenting a petition is a reading of the title and the prayer. No argumentation should take place in the course of reading a petition or using "whereas" to justify the particular petition.

I warn Hon. Members that if they have several petitions they should file them all when they are recognized, because I will not recognize Members twice on petitions.

Mr. Anguish: I find that a very strange ruling.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the Hon. Member read his petition. That is what he is recognized for.

Mr. Anguish: The petitioners stress that Canada, as a traditionally peaceful nation, can and must play a crucial role in achieving multilateral disarmament—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to tell the Hon. Member that he does not seem to be listening to what the Chair is saying. I just told the Hon. Member that he should not be giving any more details than the title and the prayer. He continues exactly where he left off. If that is the way the

Hon. Member pretends to obey the Chair, I must tell him that he does not have a clear notion of what parliamentary behaviour requires of Hon. Members.

Mr. Anguish: They believe that the passage of Bill C-678 will allow Canada to act as a mediator along with other countries that wish to participate in the world-wide nuclear disarmament process. And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I have some other petitions here this afternoon so I should present them at the same time and I will just being to go through them.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With great respect, the Standing Orders do not support the contention that a Member rising to present a petition must present all of the petitions that a Member might have in a bundle, whether they be two, three or a dozen.

Surely the Standing Orders support the Member's right to rise and present a petition which may deal with the two I presented yesterday, for instance, about the Yukon placer mining industry. If they have a petition with respect to the state of the egg industry in this country, they are entitled to present that separately. If they have some other subject matter from another part of the country, they may present that separately.

Surely the time-honoured right of presenting petitions is the right of the citizen in the various parts of this country to be heard in a distinct and separate fashion. The Member who rises to present that petition is honouring that right of the citizen in presenting the petition in that fashion.

I would therefore suggest that while the process could be speeded up somewhat, nevertheless the right remains in the citizen, really, to have a petition signed by a particular group of citizens submitted by a Member quite distinctly and separately from any others. If the rule were to be otherwise, we would have occasions when we would be duplicating some instances in the House which the Chair has frowned upon in the past with respect to petitions that are two or three blocks long with signatures attached to them. I suggest that while it is not our intention to engage in this process this day, Members should be entitled to proceed by presenting their petitions individually.

I believe the Chair is correct in restricting the presentation of petitions so as to exclude any debate thereon, certainly to exclude reading them because the rules do not permit that. The rules, however, do go slightly beyond the reading of the title and the prayer. The rules stipulate that the nature of the petition can be explained by the Member presenting it, for instance. There are other criteria set forth in the rules. If the rules were to be applied strictly to the petitions, I would have no problem with their presentation in accordance strictly with the rules. But you do get into the nature of a petition and you also get into the purpose of a petition under the Standing Orders. That is permitted, in my reading of the Standing Orders.