

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

Your committee proposes that the amendments to the appropriate standing orders be as simple as possible, but that the new debating process be controlled by the Chair in accordance with the following guidelines.

It then deals with the ten-minute period and says:

Ten minutes set aside following a Member's speech should be used to question a Member or comment briefly on the speech in a manner strictly relevant to the content of that speech.

That all feeds back to what my friend said at the outset of his argument. A speech is a speech, a question in the context of the rules is a question and a comment is a comment. Considering the limitation thereafter on speaking time, one must bear that in mind.

● (1550)

I say with respect that the general principles which should be borne in mind by the Chair are the limitation on debates in terms of time in the broad sense and the right of an Hon. Member to speak. Members rarely have an opportunity to rise and speak forever; therefore there is a limitation, when the House has decided to limit the time of speeches even more, there should be no constriction put on the rules that would limit in any way the speaking time of Members, except to the extent of complying with the rules.

To put it another way, if the Chair should decide that four Members ahead of the ones who would be otherwise cut back should be cut back in their speeches from 20 minutes to ten minutes because of including the ten-minute period, the Chair would by that order and that decision be precluding those four Members from exercising their full rights. In other words, the rules should be construed to permit Hon. Members to utilize to the fullest the scope permitted in the rules.

My respectful submissions to the Chair are that the scope is 20 minutes and that the comments and questions or the new innovation is not to be considered a speech. In fact, the rules indicate that it is not a speech; it is a comment or a question and ought only to be so construed. The rules provide now for eight hours of 20-minute speeches or speaking time. I do not know where it cuts, where it falls or who it cuts out, but it seems to me that it is a reasonable interpretation to place on the rules, especially when we are moving into this experiment which seems to be working quite well.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the points raised by Hon. Members who preceded me, and perhaps they may wish to recall that the purpose of these changes in our parliamentary procedure was not to cut down on each Member's speaking time in the House but to give this parliamentary institution a more efficient set of procedures.

This Parliament is literally dying a slow death, because we parliamentarians have been unable to streamline our operations. The Bills that are languishing on the Order Paper are a monument to our collective shame. The lack of efficiency of this Parliament in passing legislation is incredible. Certainly, nobody can beat our record for endless talking, but when it comes to passing legislation we are incredibly ineffective.

I would therefore draw your attention to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the new Standing Orders prescribe ... They refer to consideration of a Bill for eight hours, and not for periods of twenty minutes. The Standing Orders clearly prescribe that the House of Commons is to consider a Bill for eight hours.

And now we have this new interpretation, this new brain-wave that would have exactly the opposite effect to what we wanted to achieve, which is to make debate more interesting and more lively. Enough of those long, repetitive forty minute speeches. Everyone agreed this formula had to be changed.

We therefore decided to have 20 minute speeches and allow another ten minutes, not only for speeches and comments by the Member recognized by the Speaker, but for dialogues and exchanges which allow the Member to complete his speech while replying to the comments of other Members.

It is appropriate to note, Mr. Speaker, that if we accepted the interpretation given by the NDP Member, we would unduly extend the debate and no longer spend eight hours considering a bill, but add many additional ten minute periods, which means that we would no longer be discussing a bill for eight hours, but perhaps for nine or ten hours. I believe that this interpretation is wrong. In any case, I know that you will take the matter under advisement, look fully into it and probably comment on it next week.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Is the Hon. Member for Dauphin-Swan River (Mr. Lewycky) rising on the same point of order?

**Mr. Lewycky:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid I have to disagree with the feelings of the Hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) on the matter. It seems to me that the rules indicate that time for questions, if required, shall be made available. They allow this additional opportunity for questioning, but I view it as being a supplementary matter to the eight hours of speeches that can be given.

It is similar to interruptions in the proceedings under Statements pursuant to Standing Order 21 or in Question Period. They are not included because they are something different. I think this provision is different in that regard. It is set out as a separate clause from the one dealing with the first three speakers and also from those who speak for ten minutes.

I would just like to say that I concur with my colleague and with the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) that it should not be included in the eight hours of consideration.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lachance:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words to the comments of the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and the Hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet). As a member of the Special Committee on Regulatory Reform, I must say there was no doubt in the Committee members' minds on this point, and I