

Northwest Territories Act

of view it is not a debate at all. Without going into dictionary definitions too much, it seems to me quite clear from the Oxford dictionary definition of the word "debate" that the word implies the expression of at least two different points of view. Anything less than that is not a debate at all.

No matter what ruling Mr. Speaker Glen made, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if we are to accept that ruling and continue to follow the direction that there must be only comments from the negative point of view, then you are placed in a very difficult position because it will be very hard for you to determine in some cases until the closing remarks whether the discussion is from the negative or positive point of view. An analysis of the subject matter before the house would be presented by a member, and unless Your Honour attempted to impose a condition at the very outset that a member must state what his ultimate remarks were going to be, then you would be in a position in many cases where you could not say whether it was negative or positive.

I am pointing these things out because I suggest a strict interpretation of that ruling presents a number of difficulties. Your Honour has left the impression, I think, that you have already come to the conclusion that a debate of some kind is permitted.

Mr. Speaker: That has been agreed by all hon. members who have spoken.

Mr. Drew: If that is the case then I simply emphasize the fact, and from no hair-splitting point of view, that if we are to accept the proposition that there is to be a debate, we then accept the proposition that two different points of view at least can be expressed. If two different points of view at least are to be expressed, then it seems to me once a motion is introduced there should be freedom of discussion as to whether the motion can proceed.

I submit that there is another point in this matter which deserves consideration. This is a motion to go into committee in regard to a certain resolution. We need not consider the resolution now before us because the discussion relates to any resolution of this nature. Conceivably there might be very strong reasons in the minds of many of the members, conceivably the majority of members, why we should not go into committee. If there is to be a statement by the minister and then if there is to be anything in the nature of a debate at all, surely the pros and cons as to why we should go into committee can be expressed in the ordinary way. I submit that anything else is not consistent with the general practice that once a motion becomes debatable it can be debated.

[Mr. Drew.]

Mr. Speaker: Would you not think it better if the cons were discussed first and then the pros? Those opposed to the motion would give reasons why they were opposed to it or why they think they should have further information, and then the minister could reply and give an explanation why he thinks we should go into committee. As I pointed out, at the present time we have the reverse method. The minister expresses his view and then those opposed express their views and the minister has no right of reply.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I submit the minister is in a position to state reasons why we should go into committee. Then it would seem that others should be in a position to explain why we should not go into committee. I do suggest that there are perhaps reasons in this house why it should be possible for members to express opinions on both sides; because we have not yet reached the point, and it does not seem that we are likely to reach the point, where all those who are in opposition follow a uniform course in regard to expression on matters that come before this house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drew: That being so it would seem we do create a double difficulty if the minister must present one point of view and then everybody else must simply confine themselves to negative comments.

I do not want to extend my remarks beyond saying that I think you are going to create great difficulties of interpretation for yourself, Mr. Speaker, as well as creating a debate that is not a debate at all.

Mr. Graydon: May I say a word on this matter, Mr. Speaker. I expressed my position before, but I should like to make this observation. If Your Honour gives a ruling that the debate is to be strait-jacketed, we are going to have wholesale confusion with respect to this part of the debate on the resolution upon which a bill will be founded. The confusion will arise from Your Honour attempting in some way to regulate the debate on grounds other than relevancy. Your Honour has never had to do that, to my knowledge, with respect to any debate in the House of Commons. So long as the speeches are relevant and are kept within the proper time and do not offend the rules of the house generally, the debate is allowed to continue.

If this change is allowed to operate as a rule, then we are going to have tedious and time-consuming arguments over what the Speaker thinks is the proper progress of the debate. The confusion in British Columbia would be small compared with the confusion