

*Canadian Flag*

but I emphasize the fact that May is confirming the fact of the ancient right to have a complicated question divided into its component parts. The paragraph goes on:

When two or more separate propositions are embodied in a motion or in an amendment, the Speaker calls the attention of the house to the circumstances; and, if objection be taken, he puts the question on such propositions separately, restricting debate to each proposition in its turn; though this course is rarely adopted, because it is generally recognized that, if a motion formed of a series of paragraphs is submitted to the house, the question should be proposed on the principal paragraph, which determines the decision of the house upon the various proposals contained in the whole motion. If the necessity should arise, separate subjects contained in a motion can be placed seriatim before the house by way of amendment.

Without reading them, Mr. Speaker, may I say that this is also discussed in Campion and it is also discussed at some length in Redlich. I do not feel it is as appropriate to read from Redlich as it is to read from the later authorities, because he belongs to ancient times and his work discusses the procedures in a day when the Speaker himself formulated and put the motions to the house based on the things that were said by members. It was out of that practice that the custom arose of the house being able to say to Mr. Speaker, "Please, sir, you put too much in the motion. It should be divided." Redlich describes this situation back in the eighteenth century, and he and Campion and May also point out that this right has been protected down through the years.

Bourinot, on the same page from which I read a moment ago, page 298, has a little more to say on the matter of complicated questions, and I think it is very helpful to us in the situation that we face at this time:

As respects what are known as "complicated questions", they may always be divided into distinct parts, with the consent of the house. No individual member, however, can ask, as a matter of right, that such a question be divided, since the house alone can properly decide whether it is complicated or not and into how many propositions it may be divided.

I want to make it clear that I am not claiming any right as an individual; I am presenting the point that the house as a whole has the right to decide whether or not the question to be put before us today can be divided into its component parts. Let me continue reading from the same paragraph on page 298 of Bourinot's fourth edition:

The fact is, the necessity of dividing a complicated question is now obviated by the facilities offered for moving amendments.

[Mr. Knowles.]

I notice that in this volume that passage has been underlined. I suppose somebody has quoted that on some occasion as an argument against the right I am now maintaining. But I would draw attention to the sentence that immediately follows. It reads:

But, in any case, it is always open to a member to move formally that a question be divided.

I submit that if authorities such as those I have named, whose works span the centuries, namely Redlich, May, Campion, Todd, Bourinot and Beauchesne, all declare that it is an ancient right of parliament to have a complicated question divided, surely this is an occasion when we as a House of Commons should be allowed to exercise that right.

May I point out, Mr. Speaker, that this right which has been asserted over the decades—indeed, over the centuries—is obviously rooted in common sense. It does not make sense to ask a deliberative assembly to cast one vote on a question which contains two distinct propositions. I shall refrain from getting into anything that can be called a debate on the motion the Prime Minister is about to move, but may I use today's proposal as a clear example of what common sense calls for. There are members in this house who favour part (a) of the resolution but are opposed to part (b), yet among those members who take that position some have declared they will vote for the combined motion and some have declared they will vote against it.

Likewise there are members of this house who favour part (b) and are opposed to part (a). Some of those members have declared they will vote for the combined motion and some have declared they will vote against it. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it is utterly impossible, in view of the way in which the motion has been put before us, for the house to give a clear and meaningful vote on this question.

I want to make it very clear that I raise this question not out of any personal or party interest, not with respect to the interests of my party or with respect to the interests of any other party in this house. I raise it because I feel that on this important question of a flag for Canada we in parliament owe it to the Canadian people to see to it that under our rules and procedures we come to a clearcut decision.

So far as I personally am concerned I favour both parts of the motion now before us. I would like to see the first part modified, as everybody knows, but I favour both parts