COMMONS DEBATES

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

valuable time in argument. That is the decision we made some time ago. Hon. members may also have noticed that the NDP has amended almost every motion the official opposition has put forward this year.

Mr. Benjamin: By adding to them.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We have not challenged any of them, even though some of them were wildly irrelevant. I am going to use those as precedents for the purpose of this argument. After complaints from my colleagues I spoke to the NDP House leader, the virtuous member for Winnipeg North Centre, and told him quite frankly that we thought his actions were unethical.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He may not have liked it, but that is what we told him. He smiled that smile which has all the warmth of a gleam from a silver coffin and kept on moving amendments. Today when we do that, he begins to howl. I am not going to give the House all the examples of the amendments moved by the hon. member, but I will cite two examples which the Chair found to be acceptable, since they did not interpose. They intervened, which suggests to me that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has one standard for himself and another standard for everyone else in this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The first example was the motion of February 10 of this year. We move the following motion:

That this House denounces the government's failure to generate jobs in Canada, particularly in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, and urges immediate and resolute action, including the early presentation of a budget.

The leader of the NDP, seconded by his House leader, moved a five-paragraph amendment. I am going to read the amendment because Your Honour will have to contrast it against the delightful simplicity of our motion as well as the subject matters which were introduced and which were held to be quite proper by the Chair at that time. The following was the amendment moved on February 10:

That the motion be amended by adding at the end thereof the following words:

"This House also urges that the government

(1) immediately decrease personal income taxes for those in the lower and middle incomes to stimulate purchasing power and take up the current slack in the economy,

(2) immediately reactivate all federal capital works projects and encourage the provinces and municipalities to follow suit, and at the same time, lift any restraint on shared funding of such projects,

(3) immediately expand—in consultations with the provinces—the capital budgets for low income and co-operative housing and land assembly,

(4) immediately launch an assisted repair and renovation program of homes owned by pensioners, the disabled and low-income families, and

(5) immediately launch a program—in co-operation with the provinces—of insulating or improving the level of insulation in all residential buildings—a program which would provide not only jobs but would also conserve energy."

● (1330)

In other words, our opposition day which related to eastern Canadian unemployment was, by that amendment, not objected to by the Chair, turned into a standard NDP day in which they would tell us how they would collect billions less, spend billions more and at the same time combat inflation. That is the end of it. If that amendment, which the NDP House leader must have believed to be in order or he would not have advanced it, was in order and we use it as a guide in this matter, then I have no fears whatsoever for the amendment we have advanced today.

I will add, Mr. Speaker, that we could have used up the whole day in arguing procedural motions, but we did not. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the motion of February 23 in the course of the debate. We moved:

That this House regrets the failure of the government to develop and apply policies in the fields of the oil and gas non-renewable energy resources that are fair or just or adequate for the people or the provinces of Canada today or for the future.

That was a nice, straightforward motion. An amendment was put by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) to add these words:

—and this House expresses its opinion that the proposed construction of a Mackenzie Valley pipeline is not in the best interests of the Canadian people.

If anything, that departed from the matters that were held in our motion of that day. If that amendment was acceptable—and it was acceptable to the Chair in this House on that day—then our amendment must be perfectly in order. However, in light of the second amendment, Mr. Speaker should consider whether today's motion falls foul of the rule. This is the judgment the Chair will have to make having seen the NDP amendment of February 23. The Chair has to decide whether the NDP motion today falls foul of the rule against putting the same motion in the same session. That is exactly what they have done, and Your Honour might want to make some judgment on it. The House should wonder whether it is worth listening to people who declared over two months ago that their minds were made up before the evidence was in.

Mr. Goodale: That is what Joe Clark did on Monday.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): My respectful submission to the Chair is that our amendment is a relevant modification of the main motion. It is certainly more relevant than the two concoctions of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) which I have just recited. The choice it offers is important to many hon. members. If Your Honour feels that some way could be devised to deal quickly with the relevancy of such amendments, I would be delighted; or if hon. members of the NDP would accept that no amendments should be moved to opposition day motions, we could avoid diversions such as the ones we are now involved with because of the objection of the greatest sinner in this House in terms of moving amendments.

Failing such agreement, we have as much right as hon. gentlemen to my left to move amendments. My respectful submission is that on the authorities and the precedents that