

stantive question that may be beyond the scope of the bill. However, I will put the motion to the House, but without prejudice to a subsequent decision of the chair with regard to the motion. Meanwhile, I suggest that the debate can proceed.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Mr. Chrétien: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know how we can debate a motion that, in the opinion of Mr. Speaker, may not be order. I think that this amendment is completely out of order because it is not related to the bill. The bill deals with pollution and it seeks an extension of the power of the government in connection with a specific responsibility. I think the amendment goes much beyond the scope of the bill. I believe this is something which should be considered at this time.

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Speaker, you have already suggested a course of action and you have indicated that Mr. Speaker has some doubts about the validity of the amendment which he wishes to consider. I understood that that was the procedure we would follow. In other words, you would place a caveat on whether the amendment should be voted upon but, in the absence of Mr. Speaker himself, you suggested that the argument on the motion be proceeded with and that a ruling could be made at a later date.

However, apparently the minister does not find your suggestion acceptable. I was going to suggest that I have some remarks to make on the amendment. However, on the procedural point alone, I would bring to Your Honour's attention—and I put it on the record so that Mr. Speaker may have an opportunity of considering it—that the amendment I have proposed to this bill contains the exact words of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), who spoke on second reading of this bill and expressed himself in this way. He is a very senior minister of the government and he suggested, in the very words of the amendment, that this bill should be without prejudice. In other words, I am merely citing remarks made on behalf of the government by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Apparently, neither he nor the government thought those remarks were out of order. So, I fail to see how the amendment could be considered to be out of order. But that, of course, is up to Mr. Speaker when he makes the ruling.

I certainly feel very strongly that we should proceed with the debate on the

Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act motion. If Mr. Speaker considers it proper to rule on the amendment at a later date, then of course it will be perfectly appropriate.

Mr. Baldwin: I was only going to indicate that I would be prepared to present an argument on the question of the acceptability of the motion, but I did not want to interfere with the very useful and eloquent statement which I am sure is going to be made by the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt). If Your Honour now indicates that your original ruling will prevail and you will entertain an argument on the merit of the motion, I will not intervene now but will say something later on the question of order. But if Your Honour feels you want to hear argument on the point raised by the minister, then I will make my contribution now.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. I have said earlier that the Chair had rather serious reservations as to the validity of the motion proposed by the member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt). This is why I have suggested that the motion be debated, subject however to the caveat that I have first pointed out, so as to allow hon. members to discuss this question which is more serious than one might think and which might have some bearing upon amendments to other bills presented to the House.

I am, however, prepared to listen to hon. members in connection with the procedure so that the Chair might be better informed when the time comes to rule on the validity of the motion.

[English]

Mr. Baldwin: The very useful, and what we regard as very essential, amendment which has been offered in the name of the hon. member for Oxford is, in our opinion, quite valid because it fulfills that condition precedent to an amendment, namely, that the objective of it is to effect such an alteration in the question as could obtain the support of those who, without such alteration, must either vote against it or abstain from voting thereon. That is as set out in citation 201. It is all very well for the minister to talk about pollution, but I should like to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to one or two parts of the bill. For example, clause 3 states:

Except where otherwise provided, this act applies to the waters (in this act referred to as the "Arctic waters") adjacent to the mainland and islands of the Canadian Arctic—