

Unemployment Insurance Act

With respect to all hon. members, fully conscious of the importance of this matter and taking into account the very strong arguments put forward by various hon. members, I still do not see how I can in conscience, respecting my obligations to the House, accept amendments which might have made it a little easier for the House to consider the points made by hon. members. It is my hope that this will be done when we reach a later stage of the bill. Hon. members will then have every opportunity to move amendments which I hope will be in order. If we do eventually move on to third reading of the bill, and amendments are moved which will make it possible for the House to consider the very interesting aspects of the matters incorporated in such amendments, then I shall certainly look at the amendments objectively and, if they are within the rules, allow the House to consider them.

I regret very much that I have to reach this decision. It has caused me much anguish and pain, and I hope all hon. members will appreciate the difficult position in which the Chair is placed in such circumstances.

• (1610)

Mr. Andras moved that the Bill be concurred in.

Mr. Baldwin: I rise, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We were addressing ourselves directly to the first amendment in the name of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) and Your Honour in the course of your address, I won't say disparagingly but without too much enthusiasm, expressed your sorrow about the matter. I am equally sorry, possibly even more so. I think possibly the remarks of Your Honour were particularly appropriate to the amendment of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) but I believe there might have been some debate in respect of the first amendment and my amendment.

Mr. Speaker: The point raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) is well taken. I felt that the same difficulties applied, unfortunately, in respect of the three amendments. I did not intend to deprive hon. members who might wish to do so of the opportunity to submit arguments in support of the other motions. I believe the hon. member for Peace River will appreciate that. I did pause a moment before I proceeded with the next step of procedure in the expectation that someone might take up the other point relating to the other proposed motions. Without prejudice in respect of their acceptability, I would have no objection if hon. members would like to speak to these other motions. I am sorry I did not appreciate that the hon. member for Peace River wished to do so.

Mr. Baldwin: I think, Mr. Speaker, I would be inclined to agree that the remarks you made are applicable to the second amendment in the name of the hon. member for Yukon. However, I think there is this additional comment which might be made. I think we might examine the philosophy under which the new rules were brought forward. Let us look, for example, at clause 2. If we were in Committee of the Whole the clauses would be put by Your Honour one by one. If clause 2 were put, surely it would be within the competence of the members of the Committee of the Whole to vote against clause 2. They could vote for clauses as they saw fit, but could vote against clause 2. Your Honour will see the predicament in which the House

[Mr. Speaker.]

is placed by the decision which has been made. Having examined very closely the decision of the Chair in respect of reasoned amendments, as I construe the situation it becomes virtually impossible for members of this House to deal with a bill in which there are two clauses which are completely separate and independent. Certainly, no one I am sure can argue that clauses 1 and 2 have any relation to each other. Members are placed in an unfortunate position. We have indicated our willingness to accept changes with regard to the ceiling, although we disagree with the government concerning the amount. However, we say there may be a need to establish some ceiling.

Then, we say we do not like what the government is attempting to do in clause 2 and we want an opportunity to explain our position and indicate our objection to clause 2. Certainly, in Committee of the Whole we could have done this. We might take as an example the amendment which stands in my name. Let us say that we eliminate the second part of it. Your Honour will observe that the amendment provides that we amend the bill by deleting lines 6 to 27 inclusive on page one and substituting therefor the following. Let us say that the substitution had not been included in the amendment and I had simply moved that we delete lines 6 to 27 which are, in effect, the entirety of clause 2. Then, we would have had a chance to challenge the government and give members of this House an opportunity to divide on this issue of the second clause. We do not like what the government is attempting to do. We say we may have to be prepared to accept the change in the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 which does something in respect of the ceiling, but that we do not like what the government is doing in respect of this other matter and we want an opportunity not only to speak to it but also to vote our opposition to it.

In the light of what Your Honour has ruled on other occasions we are deprived of the opportunity to voice our opposition. I know it is not for Your Honour to correct the defects in the Standing Orders, but I submit there is an ancient practice that in a situation of this kind the Chair should be vigilant in trying to find an opportunity for hon. members to have their voices heard and their votes noted. With respect, I suggest that this is a very serious matter. No matter what Your Honour may say about our opportunities during third reading, any opportunity to present a meaningful amendment in respect of this repugnant clause would not only be limited but would be eliminated. All through the course of this debate the government has been saying that this is not an appropriation but is an advance. The government is attempting to say it is an advance under clause 137 of the bill. Of course by so doing it is declaring that it never was an appropriation. If it had been declared to be an appropriation, certainly all we would need to do would be to vote against that clause, but we lose that opportunity because we would have to vote against the whole bill.

I submit to Your Honour, with a strong sense of urgency, that as ingenious as we might be it would be very difficult for us to find an amendment at third reading which would permit this House to divide on the question of the impropriety of what is proposed in clause 2 of this bill. I ask Your Honour to consider that particular suggestion.