

Old Age Security Act

• (1730)

Our rules are not a bar to meaningful discussion and exchange of ideas; they cannot be. We cannot have dead-hand rules of that type. I have had enough experience in the Chair in dealing with points of procedure to know there must be some form of structure for reasoned amendments. Your Honour may not have seen this type of amendment before, but both the House and the Chair operate by way of experience. Until we get guidelines which will be helpful both to those presiding over the sessions of this chamber and to members of this House, I submit that very serious consideration should be given to this question.

Your Honour may wish to reserve opinion as to the extent of the amendment, and then I might be in a very happy position whatever may be the views of the Chair on this amendment. Perhaps we are setting a few precedents. However, if a few precedents are set, when we get to the happy time of having some of these guidelines it will be much easier to understand what they are.

Mr. Jerome: Mr. Speaker, my comments will be very brief. I submit that the proposed amendment is not procedurally acceptable, on two grounds. First, I submit that an amendment to a motion for second reading of a bill must be in opposition to the bill or the progress of the bill. This motion fails to do that directly or in clear language. It appears that the intent of the motion is to try to have the best of both worlds. The intent is to try to adopt that which is proposed in the bill but suggest that the government should consider going further. I submit that is clearly not within the limits of the precedents and rules that surround the moving of amendments to second reading motions.

In any event, the problem of the recommendation that is an essential part of this bill is that although the member is not endeavouring to move an increase directly in the expenditures that would be involved under this bill, in effect his amendment asks the government to do that for him or consider the advisability of doing it for him. Were that to be done or attempted, it would require steps which would exceed the recommendation of His Excellency with regard to this bill.

The hon. member is cleverly endeavouring to try to have the best of both worlds, being in support of the measure as far as it goes instead of being opposed, and at the same time causing further study to be made on it. Without directly moving that further expenditures be made, the hon. member is suggesting that a study of further expenditures be made. In both respects the motion is out of order.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, I contend that the amendment is out of order. There was a time in this House when we debated the recommendations which preceded a bill. Under the new rules we do not debate such recommendations. What the amendment clearly tries to do is go beyond the scope of the recommendation of Her Majesty. By the device of an amendment to a bill, the hon. member is doing something he cannot do because of the restrictions that exist in terms of the recommendation on which the bill is based. I see the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) shaking his head.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was merely saying the hon. member meant His Excellency rather than Her Majesty.

Mr. Francis: I appreciate the correction of my good friend. I hope he agrees with the substance of my argument.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Not necessarily.

Mr. Francis: An amendment to a bill cannot go beyond the scope of the recommendation on which the bill is based. I submit the amendment fails in that respect and attempts to impose an additional drain upon the treasury.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) has suggested that I might take this matter under advisement. I do not think any great harm will be done if I do that. It is now 20 minutes before six o'clock. As I indicated initially, my inclination is that the amendment is not in order. I am still of that opinion, but I will follow the suggestion of the hon. member for Edmonton West, give further thought to this question and make a ruling that might be helpful. If hon. members are agreeable, I will reserve my decision until the bill is next before the House.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to Bill C-207, I find there are several things I should like to say first. The problem is that one has to make a choice. The first thing I shall do is direct a word of encouragement and hope to the senior citizens of Canada, particularly their very active organizations. I say to them that their message is getting through. Even this government is realizing that it cannot fail to improve the pensions of our senior citizens. That is why we have this measure before us today.

When I mention senior citizens and their active organizations, I am thinking of groups with which I am in contact all the way from Newfoundland and Cape Breton Island to Vancouver Island, organizations such as Pensioners Concerned, United Senior Citizens of Ontario and senior citizens organizations and federations in every province of Canada. I also think of a new body on the Pacific coast known as Pensioners for Action Now. Members of all parties who have recently been in Vancouver are aware of this organization. Some of them are perhaps painfully aware of how hard the members of that body are working for a basic pension of \$150 a month and for other improvements for our senior citizens.

The legislation before us today falls far short of the hopes, expectations and demands of our senior citizens and it will not satisfy them. However, at least the fact that it has been brought in says to these people that their message is getting through. I trust they will be encouraged, by this fact, to keep up their campaigns. They know that some of us in this House of Commons will continue to support their hopes, expectations and demands until we win real justice for our older and retired people.

The second thing I wish to say as a first word is that to some of us in this House of Commons this is a very happy day. I do not say that because we are thoroughly satisfied with the legislation the Minister of National Health and