And debate arising on the motion of Mr. Gray for Mr. Benson, seconded by Mr. Davis,—That Bill C-259, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act and to make certain provisions and alterations in the statute law related to or consequential upon the amendments to that Act, be now read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West), seconded by Mr. Ricard moved, in amendment thereto,—That all the words after "That" be struck out and the following substituted:

"this House deeply concerned with unacceptable levels of inflation, persisting unemployment and stagnant industry and conscious of the necessity for meaningful tax reform declines to give second reading to a bill which does not provide sufficient stimulus to the economy of Canada with appropriate tax cuts and incentives, does not contain adequate tax exemptions and is not calculated to materially improve business and labour conditions in Canada now or in the foreseeable future."

And a point of order arising thereon;

RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I thank honourable Members for the advice and guidance they have provided to the Chair in relation to the very difficult ruling which has to be made on the procedural acceptability of the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert).

Honourable Members have recognized that it is difficult for the Chair to rule on the procedural aspect of reasoned amendments. Honourable Members who have participated in this very interesting procedural debate have suggested, or some of them have, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to propose acceptable reasoned amendments. I cannot agree entirely with this suggestion. If honourable Members will look into the record of our House of Commons, they will note that during most of our parliamentary history, so-called reasoned amendments have been proposed on rare occasions. It is only during the last few years it seems, that Members have dwelt on the use of this device—that is the device of reasoned amendment—on second or third reading of bills. I agree that more of such amendments have been ruled out of order in recent years. That is, of course, because many more of that kind of amendment is now being proposed for consideration by the House. In other words, if 25, 40 or 50 years ago only one or two such amendments were proposed every session, not many of them were ruled out of order—perhaps one or two every session.

It seems to me from my own experience, which is very limited in comparison to that of many other honourable Members in this House, and I go back only to the days when I was Deputy Speaker,—I have the impression that very few understood a reasoned amendment. It is only in recent years that the use of that kind of amendment has flourished for the benefit of honourable Members and a nightmare for the Chair. Because there has been a tendency in that direction, I have intended for some weeks and particularly in recent days to study closely all our precedents in relation to those motions. That is a study which I must admit is not yet complete. When it is, I feel I will be in a much better position to set down rules which will take into account not only British but also relevant Canadian precedents.

Briefly, honourable Members will know from my having quoted them on a number of occasions, which rules govern the contents of reasoned amendments. Those rules are enumerated in May's 17th edition at page 527. As suggested by the honourable Member for York South (Mr. Lewis) I am sorry to disappoint honourable Members, but I must admit that I have got a copy of May's also. There is one rule among others which states that such amendment should be "declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy or provisions of the bill". Looking at the amendment proposed by the honourable Member for Edmonton West I find it difficult to identify any such principle; to the effect that the amendment is "declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy or provisions of the bill". Other conditions also expressed by Sir Erskine May and are enumerated at page 527 of his 17th edition. I doubt whether there is any purpose in my restating those conditions.

However, looking closely I appreciate that in many respects the amendment proposed by the honourable Member and now before the House seems to meet some of the requirements proposed by Sir Erskine May. The most important of those of course is that the principle of relevancy should govern every such motion. This is the point to which the Honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) addressed himself clearly and cogently a few minutes ago when he suggested to honourable Members that relevancy is the cornerstone of parliamentary debate. There can be no effective parliamentary debate—there can be no logical debate without the application of that principle by the Chair and, I should add, by all honourable Members who take part in the debate.

As my colleagues will recognize, it is a most difficult task and a great responsibility for the Chair to insist that honourable Members address themselves to the question before the House. They must not stray too far from a motion and they should try to limit their contributions to the motion before the House. It is a basic principle that there can be debate only when there is a motion before the House and contributions of Members should be limited to what is before the House. Otherwise I suggest there can be no meaningful debate in the House. It is the duty of the Chair to invite honourable Members to limit themselves to what is before the House at the time. It is a responsibility of the Chair to suggest to honourable Members that amendments should be relevant to the motion before the House. Again, I say it is incumbent upon honourable Members also to co-operate with the Chair in that respect.