

Employment Support Bill

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members have heard the amendment moved by the hon. member for Témiscamingue. I have listened carefully while the hon. member, for the information of his colleagues, read the amendment which he wishes to submit to the approval of this House. I must say right away to the member for Témiscamingue that I have serious doubts about the legality of his amendment, strictly from the point of view of parliamentary procedure. Still, I should not want to give my decision without hearing the comments members may want to make to enlighten me. If some members wish to express their points of view on the matter, I shall be pleased to hear them out. Otherwise, I am ready to give my ruling.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might request that the hon. member send me a copy in English, because I usually send my notices to him in French.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I did not have time to make a translation, but I will personally make one for the minister and send it to him.

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Témiscamingue has just introduced a reasoned amendment to reject, if it were, Bill C-262. My hon. colleagues have heard the member for Témiscamingue insist on the fact that the bill must essentially be aimed at providing subsidies to industries, the government giving them its support so that they may solve the difficulties brought about by the American decision. The hon. member for Témiscamingue would like to see it done the other way around. Instead of giving certain amounts to individuals the government should deal with the problems of the consumer and producer and should immediately abolish the 12 per cent excise tax. It therefore contradicts the bill itself and, in that regard, it complies with citation 382 of the Fourth Edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, where we may read the following:

It is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a Bill, to move as an amendment to the question, a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to... the principles... of the bill...

Mr. Speaker, I basically contend that according to its principle the bill suggests that the federal government, faced with the American position, distribute a total of \$80 million, at the cost of \$300,000 in management, to undertakings complying with certain basic criteria and this in order to mitigate the disruptive effects of the American decision. As I said, that is the basic principle of the legislation.

My colleague the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) claims—and I agree with him—that the principle of the bill is not in itself acceptable to our party and that it is nothing but bad business, a bad administrative principle.

This is why he proposes, with our support, to turn the principle of the bill around and that instead of granting

[Mr. Caouette.]

subsidies, we eliminate this excise tax, which would have just about the same results, and even more, and reach producers and consumers.

Citation 382 of Beauchesne's clearly indicates that it is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a bill—this is indeed our case, since we do not agree with the principle of the bill—to move as an amendment to the question a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill.

Now, what does this amendment say? Here is what it says, and I quote:

That Bill C-262 be not now read a second time—

—it is a flat refusal—

—but that it be resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the Government should—

We comply even more with Beauchesne's, citation 382, when we say that the Government should...

—immediately abolish the 12 per cent excise tax on products manufactured in Canada.

There, Mr. Speaker, is the conflicting principle stated in the said bill, and I shall spare you the long quotation from May's Parliamentary Practice, 17th edition, where almost the same interpretation of the rules can be found.

Besides, citation 382 in Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms also states the following:

—a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill, or expressing opinions.

In the case of the New Democratic Party, the amendment moved this afternoon by the hon. member for York South was rather a resolution declaratory stating a lengthy enumeration of somewhat vague things, while the amendment of the hon. member for Témiscamingue is about precise measures, that is a 12 per cent tax, which cannot be found in the bill, and it is contrary to the very principle of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that your usual competence and your kind attention towards hon. members will guide you in rendering a fair decision by which we shall abide.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lotbinière for his remarks on the procedural aspect of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

I must remind the hon. member for Lotbinière that an amendment, even one moved in the form of a declaratory resolution, must nevertheless abide by the principle of relevancy. I take the liberty of quoting in that respect an excerpt from the 17th edition of May's Parliamentary Practice on page 527:

[English]

The principle of relevancy in an amendment governs every such motion. The amendment must "strictly relate to the bill which the House, by its order, has resolved upon considering"—

[Translation]

In other words, and even in the case of an amendment moved in the form of a declaratory resolution, as I said, the principle of relevancy still applies.