

from time to time during this session, when important war measures were to be considered, much time was occupied with motions preparatory to going into supply or into ways and means. I hesitate to criticize too severely those who moved those motions; but I believe, in the best interests of our country, we must give our first attention to the war measures which the government brings down. As far as the official opposition is concerned, it is for no small or picayune motives that we have raised our voices from time to time against measures which we believed were not in the interests of the country and should not be proceeded with in the form in which they were presented. As regards amendments such as the one now before the house, they are frequently brought down in the middle of the afternoon session; they cover, as this particular amendment does, a wide variety of subjects, and certain clauses cannot but call for the support of many members of our group, perhaps of the entire group itself. I must, however, define clearly our position with respect to this particular amendment. It proposes this substitution:

This house is of the opinion that it is expedient that measures be taken by the government to remove amongst Canadian workers the causes of justifiable discontent brought about by the government's policy in relation to frozen wages. . . .

I believe all hon. members will have recognized by now the sympathy which I, as leader of the official opposition, have always given in word and action to the legitimate claims of the workers of Canada. For that attitude I make no apology; during the whole of my public and private life I have been a strong supporter of labour, and I do not intend to reverse my position. But with relation to this particular amendment I find such vagueness in its phraseology that I do not feel it merits our support. I am as much in favour as any who may support this amendment, and perhaps more so, of ironing out inequalities in respect of the wages of working men. But the general phraseology of this amendment may be interpreted as a direct attack upon the broad anti-inflationary policy which most of us in this chamber are anxious shall not be assailed. Therefore, I say to those who have moved and seconded the amendment and to those who may support it that, while I do not take a back seat to anyone in my earnest and conscientious and effective support of labour, I cannot see my way, in view of the vagueness of the terms of the amendment, to give it support.

The reference later in the amendment to "unjust methods of imposing income war

taxes" covers a tremendously wide field. So far as debates in this chamber are concerned, we prefer, when these matters come up in committee, to attack particular inequalities and injustices. This method, we believe, is more effective than to cast a blanket, so to speak, over the entire income tax structure, a course which might be interpreted, perhaps with reason, in some quarters as a general attack on the whole system of raising money to carry on the war. We are not prepared to do that at the present moment.

The amendment is also vague in its reference to rationing of food products. It states "certain food products"; it does not specify the instances of which it complains; it does not furnish information upon which we can form a considered judgment regarding any special complaints of inequalities in that connection.

There are parts of the amendment, underlying the general blanket, upon which we cannot agree with the government. I want it to be distinctly understood that the stand we take is not opposed to labour or the improvement of the position of the working man. Nor does it preclude us from attacking anything which we regard as an inequality when income tax resolutions are before the house or in respect of any other matters dealt with in the amendment.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, however, we are in a wartime period, and I think we ought to get along speedily with the government's war-time measures. That is our first and primary duty as members of parliament. While refusing our support to this amendment, we reserve the right to advocate the things for which we have consistently stood during the session. By voting against the amendment we accord our whole-hearted support to greater, more effective, and more rapid prosecution of the whole war effort. Having in mind the position I took at the beginning of the session, I feel bound to implement my promises and undertakings at that time. That we intend to vote against the amendment on account of its blanket nature does not and will not preclude us from maintaining the stand which we have always taken in this chamber, and which we hope will prove beneficial in the serious times which lie ahead.

For these and other reasons which I think will appeal to most hon. members I must vote against the amendment.

Amendment (Mr. Roy) negatived.

Motion agreed to, and the house went into committee of ways and means, Mr. Bradette in the chair.