

Old Age Security Act

that the House witnessed a number of attempts by hon. members, in particular the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), to move reasoned amendments. Until my amendment to Bill C-259 on second reading, none had succeeded.

I say this not in the spirit of a game to be played between members of the House and the Chair, but the question of reasoned amendments is of recent origin so far as this House is concerned. To use the words I used, as recorded at page 7763 of *Hansard*, on that occasion when I started to address the Chair, Beauchesne is singularly dangerous to rely on in this day of vastly changed rules, and more reliance should be placed in this particular field on Erskine May's Seventeenth Edition. We know that in the British House a reasoned amendment is the normal type of amendment. If Your Honour wishes me to read a number of references and examples that have been used in recent years, we will see that the reasoned amendment is a very useful tool for an expression of the views of the House with regard to a bill.

• (1720)

Before this House there is a motion for second reading of this bill and its referral to committee. I put it to Your Honour that it is not sufficient that the only acceptable amendment is one that is completely opposed to the bill. I would say there is no such thing, as complete confrontation which is absolutely necessary with regard to a bill. There can be opposition in degree, criticism in degree or suggestion for modification. When it comes to the question of whether a motion at second reading stage is one of opposition or is a dilatory motion, one which asks that the bill be not now read a second time but be read six months hence is a dilatory motion which opposes every principle of the bill.

The principle of the bill, in this case, is that the Old Age Security Act be amended in a number of particulars. It provides for the application of a cost of living escalator clause. It asks that there be an increase in the guaranteed income supplement; that the cost of living escalator formula shall apply to the guaranteed income supplement; that there be a change in the residence requirement for those entitled to Canadian pensions who live outside the country.

Which one of these amendments is deemed to be a principle of the bill? Not one. That there be an increase in pensions? My colleague proposes, and he cannot do this directly, that the cost of living escalator formula should apply retroactively to the basic pension from the date of the introduction of the cost of living escalator provision. In the wording of the motion he respects the limitation on the ability of a private member of this House to bring in a motion which, if accepted, would force the government into the expenditure of public funds.

But that is not the case at all. We do, in a reasoned way, indicate support for the measures that have been brought in, but indicate that there is this other need and that it must be considered by the government. We say that the government must bring in the amendment, as only it can, and that is why our amendment is so worded. The govern-

ment must take appropriate steps to introduce a proper amendment in order to effect the purpose of our motion.

There is in the motion opposition to a good part of the bill, in that it is a motion to extend certain provisions. Surely the idea of an extension of the application of a formula cannot be taken as agreement with the proposal in a government bill, no more than if the government's proposal with regard to the guaranteed income supplement increment was to increase it to \$5, because how would hon. members of this House propose to raise it to, say, \$15 or \$30 as it is now but by this type of amendment? It is sufficiently opposed to a portion of the bill that it would qualify as a reasoned amendment. It does not offend the rule regarding excessive authority on the part of a private member. It is certainly relative.

I would refer Your Honour to the arguments that were entered into at much greater length on my amendment to the omnibus income tax bill, which His Honour accepted. I would say that he did not necessarily accept it wholeheartedly. Perhaps opposition would have been somewhat easier had we enjoyed the benefit of His Honour's wise thinking on the matter of reasoned amendments, if there had been a follow-through with a set of guidelines. At the moment I would say that this House is striking out in the dark with regard to reasoned amendments and that we would save a good deal of time and difficulty for ourselves and the Chair if we had a clear understanding of the Chair's views on reasoned amendments.

As I pointed out—I do not want to belabour the point—we are working under a new set of rules whereby this House can have a meaningful exchange of ideas. I would remind Your Honour that this amendment is put forward on second reading, not at the report stage. At report stage my colleague would have to engage in the subterfuge of moving an amendment to the appropriate clause that he wished to amend, bearing in mind that he would be faced in committee with a much greater obstacle in trying to move an amendment to a particular clause extending a cost of living escalator formula which involved expenditure of public funds. That procedure, I would suggest to Your Honour, would be far too limiting for an exchange of ideas and meaningful debate in this House. Our rules are designed for meaningful debate. I reiterate what I said in September: report stage is not the most convenient, the most helpful time for this exchange of ideas.

Then we come to third reading. I again point out to Your Honour that third reading is an exceedingly limited opportunity for the exchange of ideas on a bill where the House has already had the opportunity of expressing its formal views, by way of vote if necessary, on second reading or on the really operative clauses of the bill. All it means on third reading is that either there is a standard dilatory motion, which is not helpful for the exchange of ideas, or modification of an important portion of the bill. If there is a stereotyped motion, we have to go back to committee for consideration of a particular point. The committee itself cannot do anything with regard to increasing any expenditure in the bill, so I put it to Your Honour that that avenue is barred.