

Unemployment Insurance Act

members of the House vote against the government and give a reason for so doing. As he knows, that is the function of debate, and this is one way that he can place his viewpoint on the record without putting forward what I suggest is an illegal amendment.

The second thing he can do is to move that the bill be not read the second time now, but that it be read some other time. He can also put forward a different principle from that urged by the government in its handling of this particular situation, since he does accept that it is a problem that has to be handled.

Another thing he can do—and there are many others—is move a motion that the matter be given further consideration and study in order to determine whether the principles that he wishes to put forward should gain support from some other committee or group already designated. All of those methods would give the hon. member, as he well knows, the legitimate right to put forward his views.

What the hon. member is attempting to do by quoting precedents to the effect that members are entitled to give their reasons for being opposed to second reading in an amendment is to attach a privilege to the giving of reasons in an amendment, thereby legitimizing any amendment that contains such reasons. If one were to follow that argument, then I suggest it would be a trap that would lead one to the curious situation where any amendment put forward that happened to contain a paragraph taken from any other accepted amendment would have to be accepted by the House, regardless of how many other ways it offended the rules that are before us.

I submit that clearly the interpretation of those precedents is that an hon. member is entitled to give his reasons for objecting to second reading at this time, provided his amendment on second reading stage is in order. This is the very point to which the hon. member refused to address himself during the course of his remarks. I suggest that obviously the amendment that he has put forward is nothing more than the negation of the motion and therefore is not in order. The fact it attaches reasons makes it all the more offensive and in no way supports his argument.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair would like to thank those hon. members who have taken part in the discussion of this interesting point of order. My decision is reserved. I now call on the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I earnestly hope that in my contribution to this debate I shall be able to avoid participating in the charges and countercharges that have marked a good deal of the discussion that has taken place this afternoon. Indeed, I want to thank the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) for giving me a cue for the opening of my remarks. He said at the end of his speech, at the point where he had forgotten to move his amendment, that he hoped I would demonstrate my belief in the rule of law or my belief in the accountability of the government, or whatever the phrase was, and that is exactly the point I want to make.

[Mr. Jerome.]

• (1720)

We believe in the rule of law. The Unemployment Insurance Act is a law of this land, passed by this parliament. That act provides very clearly that the benefits set out in the act shall be paid to those who are entitled to receive them. Lest there be any doubt on that point may I draw attention to Section 135(1) of the Unemployment Insurance Act which reads in part as follows:

There shall be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and charged to the Unemployment Insurance Account

(a) all amounts paid as or on account of benefits under this Act; and

(b) the costs of administration of this Act.

(2) Notwithstanding the *Financial Administration Act*, amounts referred to in paragraph (a) of subsection (1) shall be paid by special warrants drawn on the Receiver General, issued by the Commission, and bearing the printed signature of the Chairman and Secretary of the Commission.

That is part of the fundamental law of this land, that unemployment insurance benefits are to be paid. I submit that if the government found itself in some difficulty because of misleading estimates, because of bungling here and there, or what have you, it still had an absolute responsibility to keep that law and to pay those benefits. If there were any difficulties that stood in the way it was bound to find a way to get around those difficulties.

I say to you that if because of a negative amount in the unemployment insurance account the government had broken that law by refusing to pay unemployment insurance benefits, I do not know what the Tories might have done—

Mr. Nielsen: You know very well.

Mr. Baldwin: We would have done it legally.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):—but we would have raised the roof and the people of this country would have said it is up to the government to keep the law. The government, as I say, had a clear responsibility to pay these benefits, and when it discovered there was not enough money in the unemployment insurance account, or perhaps I should say enough credit in that account to pay them, or when it found there was going to be a negative figure in due course, it had a responsibility to find a legal way to put that account into a position so that those benefits could be paid. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that it was only doing its duty when it relied on Section 23 of the *Financial Administration Act*.

A short while ago the hon. member for Peace River pointed out, as I intended to do for a different reason, that the terms of the *Financial Administration Act* were altered in two or three respects around about 1958. The hon. member for Peace River earlier today quoted that section of the *Financial Administration Act* as it used to read. It implied that it was to be used mainly in the case of an accident to a bridge, a building or a public work. The hon. member said that the change in the wording dropped that and put it in general terms.

I submit that dropping that miniscule sort of provision in respect of a bridge, a building or a public work, and putting that sanction in broad general terms, had the effect of giving the government the power to cope with