

have given advice to the government House leader, I might have said that if he wanted to make this a valid motion, instead of including the tabling of speeches, he should have said that anyone who has an amendment would be allowed to table it, and even though there would not be a chance to debate—and I will not get into that argument—at least everyone who had a legitimate and receivable motion would have the opportunity of having that amendment voted on. That provision is not contained in the motion of the government House leader. Therefore, it is defective because it is an infringement of my privilege and the privilege of every member in this House of Commons not to be able to bring amendments to the resolution. It is stifling debate on the floor of the House of Commons. The motion by itself for that very reason, apart from the tabling of speeches, should be found defective and not permitted by Your Honour.

Incidentally, I was almost prepared to stand up today and support the government on its motion to allow tabling of documents until I heard the Prime Minister. Then I realized that was the one instance where that provision should have been included. It is contrary. It may be efficient, it may be novel, it may be innovative, but the government House leader has pointed out, whatever term it was he used, was trying to demonstrate that somehow he was being very magnanimous in this motion to allow us all an opportunity to table speeches. The descriptive adjectives he should have used were that it was restrictive, regressive and devious. Those would be more appropriate adjectives for the government House leader because that is the consequence of accepting this motion as far as operation is concerned.

● (2120)

The other observation I want to make deals with the precedent that will be established if Your Honour allows this motion to go forward. My colleague from Nepean-Carleton pointed out that this motion is discursive and descriptive. He pointed out the ruling of Mr. Speaker Michener disallowing a very similar kind of motion which had a statement of alleged facts preceding a motion to substantiate or build up the case for the motion put forward.

I know yours is not an easy job, Madam Speaker. I always try to be helpful. If you allow this motion to go through, God help us in the weeks and months to come with the motions that will come forward. They will be minor novels. They will list every possible deviation and every possible offence committed by members of the government. You will have a most difficult time if you allow this precedent.

We have a lot more facts to work with than those on the government side because the government has committed so many sins of commission and omission that any motion that is brought forward, if this motion is allowed to go through, cannot be ruled out of order because it lists seriatim all the sins of the government on the basis of alleged facts. That by itself should cause you to pause to think whether this precedent, which the government is attempting to create through

the government House leader, should be allowed to become one of the precedents of our House.

The simple fact is, as Mr. Speaker Michener pointed out in his decision referred to by my colleague from Nepean-Carleton, the government party's version of Groucho Marx has now been interjected into this debate. I am glad to see he is participating with his maiden speech. The fact is I have read the decision of Mr. Speaker Michener. He makes the very valid point that if you are to allow this kind of extensive preamble with "whereas clauses", the proceedings of the House of Commons will be seriously prejudiced.

It has been a long time since I have seen a three-age motion which purports to say a lot but says little. On those bases I will conclude now—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Since the hon. member did refer to the ruling of my predecessor, Mr. Michener, I might point out that I am not reading it in the same way as the hon. member. For my benefit I would like him to give me his total interpretation of it. In his ruling, Mr. Speaker Michener said that a motion is not defective because it has these "whereas clauses."

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Merely because.

Madam Speaker: I interrupted the hon. member because he was repeating an argument brought forward by another member, but I would like to hear his interpretation. It would be helpful to me.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, I am glad you will allow me to hone in on the pith and substance of this argument.

Mr. Blais: Be short.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: No. Mr. Speaker Michener was not brief in his ruling. Neither is the government House leader in this motion. I am going to be very brief by comparison. I will look like a saint compared to the government House leader.

Mr. McKinnon: That's not difficult.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: As you will recall, Madam Speaker, the motion in question was moved by Mr. Regier, the then member of Parliament for Burnaby-Coquitlam. The motion dealt with a number of statements on the part of the minister of finance of the day, Mr. Fleming. The point was raised in the decision by Mr. Speaker Michener that if, in fact, a very substantial part of the discursive section of that motion were deleted, he would have found it in order. He said the reason was that while they were purported to be statements of fact, in the parliamentary context they tended to be in the nature of argumentative assertions in the course of amendment. In other words, they were building a case to support the passing of the motion.

The analogy is quite clear here. In his decision, he said that if they were able to delete all of those alleged statements of fact, the motion would possibly be in order. I will just read one part of his judgment: