

Food Prices Committee

'And further that the committee make an interim report, including recommendations for action, within two months of its first meeting, and a final report upon the completion of its investigation.'

• (1600)

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. lady would be willing to answer the question now that I referred to earlier. If she is successful in obtaining the prices review board that she referred to in her remarks, would she be willing to accept at the same time the establishment of a wage review board in order to achieve the purpose that she mentioned, that of controlling prices?

Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, we have said from the very beginning that we believe there must be a relationship between prices and income. We have said that incomes are not exclusively made up of wages. Incomes include wages, salaries, rents, interest, profits, dividends and all other forms of income. If we include those things as well, then we will be prepared to accept an incomes board along with the prices review board.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has some difficulty with the subamendment proposed by the hon. lady. Offhand, I am inclined to think that it is clearly not in order, because it is not directed towards the amendment offered by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) but is, rather, directed towards the main motion. I am prepared to entertain argument before making any final ruling with regard to the validity of this subamendment.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues are suggesting that you have thrown a real challenge to me, and I shall be the first to admit it. There is of course a rule, and no doubt this is what Your Honour had in mind, to the effect that a subamendment must be relevant to the amendment. Now, let me make my pitch.

The pith and substance of the amendment is that it changes the main motion. The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) admitted that there are three or four respects in which he and his colleagues wish to change the main motion; so do we. If there had been no amendment before the House when my colleague from Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) rose to speak, she would have been in a position, we feel, to move an amendment that would change the motion in two or three respects. Since the amendment of the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham changes it in one respect only, we submit it is not completely illogical to try to change it in two respects at the same time. I hope my reputation in the field of procedure will not hang completely on this effort of mine.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): But it seemed to us that we ought to bring both these propositions before the House in one amendment, if that were possible. If Mr. Deputy Speaker, since his reputation is also before the House, should decide that what we are doing is out of

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

order, we will not be offended. It simply means that at a later stage in the proceedings, if we can get the floor ahead of the Conservatives, we shall move an amendment calling for an interim report. We shall have one or two other amendments as well.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, there are reasons for supporting the validity of this motion in addition to the fact that it is being supported by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). That, of course, is a very sound reason most of the time. Although in our new roles I am not accustomed to supporting my friends to my left, we may at least begin doing so, since we may be called on to do that more often from time to time. Since the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) has indicated that we would be moving other amendments if given the opportunity, we would not object to including both in one motion. I realize this is not sufficient reason for the Chair to accept them. I must say the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has presented such an exhaustive argument that he has left little room for anything to be added. I would point out, if I may borrow from his language, that the pith and substance of his motion is to inquire into and make recommendations upon trends in food prices, but which group does it is not relevant but collateral; how it is done is not relevant but collateral.

I suggest that it is competent for us to propose variations with respect to the collateral aspects of the motion, so long as they do not interfere with the pith and substance of it. If we were to make recommendations in addition to trends in food prices, in shelter, in wages and in excessive costs of government, then, of course, Your Honour might very well say that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was arguing on slim grounds. But we are leaving untouched the kernel, the root—

Mr. MacEachen: What about the pith?

Mr. Baldwin: My hon. friend for Winnipeg North Centre has developed the pith.

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member is now considering the kernel and root.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that what we are doing is limiting the means by which we can bring about this inquiry and that, of course, is a collateral issue. It is, therefore, competent for the Chair to rule that the amendment of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) can be taken at the same time as that moved by my hon. friend for Northumberland-Durham. We might combine two votes in one and thus do our best in facilitating and accelerating the passage of this measure.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I followed the reasoning put forward by the hon. members who preceded me. It may be easier for Your Honour to deal with this subject in view of the position taken by the opposition parties in agreeing unanimously to have the subamendment put. Your Honour is not required to reason tortuously in order to justify a conclusion favourable to these arguments. I have no objection to the subamendment being put, with the consent of the House or otherwise, if Your Honour wishes to rule in that direction.