

Senator Beaudoin referred to that rule in the House of Commons that has been raised before. I am not going to deal with it. I hope that Senator Stewart or someone else will deal with that particular point because it is an important point. It was invoked by the Speaker of the House of Commons in making a recent ruling, and the effect, of course, of that rule in the House of commons, which is a standing order, is to reduce the constitutional authority of the Senate. It tries to amend the Constitution. I do not mind the House of Commons making grand statements about what its powers are, but there is no reason that we should pay any attention to them when they violate the Constitution of Canada.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Arthur Tremblay: Honourable senators, I would like to understand what Senator MacEachen has just explained to us. [Translation]

There are two related amendments. The first one affects both tables. I think it is Nos. 9 and 10 on our list.

[English]

There is 9 and 10, then there is the amendment found on page 5 of the report, which does provide for half of the total.

From what is said in the report, the actual existing legislation does mean \$2.2 billion of expenses for the government. That is found at page 4 of the French version of the report. The effect of applying the two tables in the appendix—the ones on page 13 and 14 of the French version of the report—from the best estimates we can get, would mean extra expenses in the order of \$2.6 to \$2.8 billion. So the effect of this amendment is an increase. Following your approach, this amendment might be out of order, because the same amendment does not provide for half of the costs. How do you reconcile that one amendment increases and the other amendment corrects that increase by saying, "It will be only half of the increase."

I would like to understand how you handle that.

Senator MacEachen: I am not sure I entirely understand what the senator has raised. However, the first amendment I discussed has to do with government contributions. We know that under the existing statute the government pays all of the costs of unemployment insurance benefits occasioned by a level of unemployment greater than 4 per cent. That is the government's contribution. The best estimate we had was that that cost \$2.2 billion.

● (1440)

In this amending bill the government would eliminate that contribution. In turn, we would only eliminate half of it. That, then, is our proposed amendment with respect to government contributions, and I think that we are clearly within the rules of procedure.

With respect to the tables, there is a mixture of expenditures that arises from the fact that part of the benefits—that amount over 4 per cent—is presently paid for by the government. Then, under that, in the first two phases, the other part is paid by employer and employee contributions.

I do not see that we are in any way increasing the burden over the present system. In fact, part of the expenditure in the table is covered by the \$2.2 billion. However, if you are questioning the facts, I do not have the computers or the econometric models to enable me to run through the cost of those tables. However, by logic, I do know that half is less and the government contribution—

Hon. Martial Asselin: I realize, Senator MacEachen, that you are having some problems differentiating between a reduction and an increase. However, you have not answered Senator Tremblay's question.

Senator MacEachen: I am trying to answer it. I am not sure that I understood it, but, insofar as I could understand it, I tried to answer it.

A further point is that the table that is in the form of an amendment to Bill C-21 is less costly than the present system, and that is the test. It is less costly because the entrance requirements are tougher than under the present system and the duration of benefits is less than the present system. Accordingly, then, it has to be less costly than the present system but, undoubtedly, more costly than Bill C-21.

[Translation]

Hon. Gérald A. Beaudoin: If nobody else wishes to rise, honourable senators—

Hon. Eymard G. Corbin: Are you not resuming debate?

Senator Beaudoin: Therefore, I gladly yield to Senator Stewart.

[English]

Senator Stewart: Senator Beaudoin seems to be assuming that he is rising to close a debate.

Some Hon. Senators: No, no!

Senator Stewart: In that case, please go ahead.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, this is not a motion closing a debate. This is a point of order, and senators can speak as many times as they want on a point of order. In other words, debate is never closed on a point of order until everyone stops talking. Therefore, anyone who wishes to speak may do so. What I am saying is that Senator Beaudoin can speak and then Senator Stewart can follow; it does not matter what order they choose. Since Senator MacEachen has just spoken, perhaps Senator Beaudoin should follow.

[Translation]

Senator Beaudoin: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Opposition has just said that they agree the amendments suggested in our report would increase the allocations when compared with Bill C-21. I think we all agree on that. I emphasized six of these amendments.

[English]

Therefore, if I go according to Appendix A, in English, then items 2(a), 5(a), 6, 7, 9 and 10 are the items where, so far as I can see, there is an increase—