

### Food Prices

Honour will remember the occasion when, for the first time in this House, a member of the committee other than the chairman moved concurrence in a report dealing with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It was the Interdepartmental Oil Pollution Disaster Committee. This report was presented by the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson) from the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development on December 16, 1969. That report included certain recommendations which could be construed as recommending or suggesting certain actions be taken by the government which would involve the expenditure of money. I quote from that report:

The Committee recommends that appropriate agencies of the Government move immediately to conduct research in the Arctic to gather information on the following:

There are several recommendations. One reads:

Your Committee also recommends continued research by the Department of Fisheries and Forestry to establish the extent of the fisheries potential of Arctic waters.

There may be a case to be made that these recommendations are not in the same category as those we are considering today. I will not argue that. However, a point of order was argued in this House as to the right of the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) to move concurrence in that report. Your Honour considered that, ultimately made a very intelligent decision and the hon. member was permitted to move the motion. It was a very good decision, Mr. Speaker. I wish to point out that there was not one single suggestion that the terms of the report, the language in which it was couched and the fact that it recommended certain things be done by the government, which inferentially involved the expenditure of money, could in any way be a bar to the consideration of the report.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said there are a number of precedents. I argued before Your Honour on a number of occasions that all of this jurisprudence stems from Section 54 of the British North America Act and Standing Order 62. The operative word in those two provisions is "appropriation". I do not know how in the name of heaven this House ever allowed inhibiting jurisprudence which attempts to bar this House from the opportunity of debating simple recommendations which cannot, in any sense of the word, be construed as binding upon the government to spend one red cent of money. If the government allowed the motion to come to a vote, and if the House in its wisdom saw fit to approve the motion to concur, not one red cent of money need be spent.

A number of reports have been filed which include the words "we recommend" and involve the expenditure of money. In the limited time available, I was not able to ascertain whether they were reports in respect of which a motion to concur was made. In August, 1956, a report of the joint committee on the Federal District Commission was presented. It contained the following recommendation:

In view of the magnitude of the plan for the National Capital, and the amount of money involved in developing it, we recommend that the Chairman of the Commission be employed full time at a salary and with a status commensurate with those of a Deputy Minister.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

That is one of many recommendations. It may be that these were never the subject of a motion to concur. I never examined them to that extent. The *Journals* are filled with illustrations where committees have made reports containing that recommendation. A recommendation is not defined as being an order. It is not defined as being an order in any of the dictionaries I have been able to consult this morning. I would quote, for example, from Webster's Dictionary, 7th Edition: "Worthy of acceptance or trial; urge the acceptance of". How in the name of Heaven that could be considered as constituting an order to the government to spend money, I cannot understand. I, therefore, urge the Chair and the government House leader not to try to inhibit debate, not to try to further restrict the already limited role we can play as we seek to have this matter examined in free discussion. If this report had been couched in terms which constituted a direct order to the government I would wholeheartedly agree with the President of the Privy Council. But the terms of the report being as they are, I, for one, if the report is debated, will discuss it as if it did not contain the restricting words which the minister has suggested it contains.

• (1540)

Finally, to cut short what could be a lengthy argument, I would refer Your Honour to May, on the British practice, as outlined on page 640 of the 18th edition:

Select committees may consider and report to the House resolutions recommending an outlay of public money for the purposes therein specified without the previous signification of the Royal Recommendation because such a resolution is regarded as analogous to those abstract resolutions by the House in favour of public expenditure which are in the nature of suggestions and are not in themselves binding upon the action of the House.

One day Your Honour might see fit to state a case in this context. It is a matter for the Committee on Procedure to consider, it is true, but it might be months before the committee has a chance to consider the question and report to the House, especially in the light of the situation with which we are faced at present and the problems with which many committees are confronted. I have it in mind that Your Honour might like to consider all the facts and state a case to the House at a suitable opportunity.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank hon. members for the advice and guidance they have extended for the benefit of the Chair. What the President of the Privy Council had in mind, I gather, was to register a caveat so that we might bear in mind the very interesting point of order which he raised and to which I alluded when the notice was filed and received at the table.

I must say I cannot agree with the point of view advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and, quite understandably, concurred in by the hon. member for Peace River. At the same time, I say right now that I will do nothing to prevent the consideration of this report at this time. I said, when the matter came before the House, that we were dealing actually with one of the many recommendations made by this committee. I am convinced that hon. members are anxious that we forget about the procedural aspect of this matter and proceed with our debate on the recommendations contained in the report.