

the committee to decide whether that shall be done. In the present instance there is no suggestion to increase the taxation. The suggestion in the amendment of the hon. member is to reduce the taxation of persons who have a certain number of children, so that they will not be asked to pay the arrears for 1942. That is all it means. I submit the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay was quite in order in moving that the change be made. Of course there may be other considerations, as the minister has indicated; but they are altogether different. They should be decided afterwards by a standing vote of the committee.

The point of order must be decided by you, sir. An hon. member cannot speak on anything else before the ruling has been given. At times, in discussions on parliamentary procedure and practice, there seems to be confusion in the minds of hon. members with respect to very simple facts. In my humble view nothing is easier to learn than parliamentary procedure and practice, provided that one is not afraid the ice is too thin to walk on, and provided further that he uses his good judgment in these matters.

I know very well that financial matters are within control of government, excepting the concession made to the king after his powers were taken over by parliament in the days of King John. That is an old practice. But after the assent of the governor general has been given to the expenditure of any amount of money, or to any form of taxation, there is nothing to prevent any hon. member from moving a change. Otherwise what would be the use of sitting here—merely to listen to the reading of a budget speech? What would be the use of arguing in respect of that speech, without having the power to change the provisions contained in it?

The issue at stake is of the utmost importance if the rights of parliament are to be maintained. If we are here only as rubber stamps, then let us take the few papers we have on our desks and go away. Members of parliament have the undeniable right to discuss these matters. We are not here simply to chatter like old women and gossip like spinsters after a church service. We are here to make decisions. The proposals of the Minister of Finance can be accepted only after they have the approval of the committee and, following that, the approval of the house.

You may find, sir, that I speak with animation. But this is a most serious question. If hon. members sitting in committee of ways

[Mr. Pouliot.]

and means have not the right to move an amendment either to upper or lower brackets, then what is the use of our discussions?

I am speaking always to the point of order, mark you. The point in this instance is that hon. members expect to convince the minister and have his approval. That is not at all, sir, the spirit of the old British parliamentary tradition. Whether or not the minister agrees to a suggestion made by any hon. member, that suggestion becomes effective when it receives the approval of the majority of members of the committee. That is parliamentary tradition, and no one can deny it. How is it that in the past year everyone was going before the minister like the burghers of Calais, with ropes on their necks, to ask him: "Sir, will you kindly, please, agree to this humble request we respectfully make?" That is the attitude of the committee and that of hon. members who compose it.

Mark you, sir, I have the utmost respect for the Minister of Finance. He is one of the ministers for whom I have the greatest regard. But there is a thing that counts and on which the Canadian people rely. It is that parliament shall be true to itself. Therefore, whatever may be decided on the merits of this case subsequently, I ask you, sir, to decide not in favour of the false practice that has grown up like a poisonous mushroom but to decide in accordance with the purest British traditions that it is not for the minister to make himself the final arbiter with regard to suggestions made by members. It is the obligation and the duty of the members themselves to decide the matter according to their best judgment.

If I have spoken for a few minutes on this question, sir, it is because I believe that parliament will be worth something to the Canadian people only if we take advantage of the experience gained during the centuries by the British parliament at Westminster.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): The amendment proposed by the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay, to which the minister replied with a reasoned argument during the course of which he actually forgot to take the point of order he intended to take, raises the question of the right of a private member to interfere with the prerogatives of the crown—I suppose that is the principle which the minister will invoke—in regard to taxation. At all events the effect of this amendment would be to ease the income tax position of those who have large families.

I am in agreement with the principle underlying this amendment, even though I am afraid that it may not be possible under our system to give effect to it in this way. The hon. member for Témiscouata has endeavoured to put