

Volunteer Firemen

● (1740)

Some provincial governments have reduced substantially the amount of money available from municipalities over the past few years. One is Newfoundland. Therefore, local governments cannot afford to give the benefits that richer or medium-sized community town councils can give. We see this incredible inequity with volunteer fire brigades. One volunteer fire brigade might be given a \$500 allowance, which is taken care of under the Income Tax Act, Section 61(b)(8) and, overriding that, Section 81(b) where they can take advantage of it. In a small rural community that has had its grants in lieu of taxes, its share of provincial revenues, cut over the five or six years by the incredibly stupid Newfoundland Government, they cannot give that same allowance to be used as a deduction under the Income Tax Act.

I just concluded a conversation with the Deputy Mayor of the Town of Gander. He made that very point. He knew this would be coming up before the House. He asked me to support this measure on behalf of volunteer firemen, not only in the Gander area but all around the coastline. He made the very important point that we do not pay enough attention to the volunteers, in this case the volunteer firemen.

I wanted to make note briefly of what the motion says and to say that the fastest way for it to be accomplished is to convince the Minister of Finance to bring in the necessary change from \$300 to \$500. The extreme inequity of the system and discrimination for the rural areas of this country, such as in my riding of Gander-Twillingate, should be unacceptable because provincial governments discriminate so much against the municipalities. A recent Newfoundland budget cut this back even further. Because they do that, I feel that this House of Commons should at least recognize the value of volunteer fire brigades and try to make up for the errors of Tory provincial governments which could not care less about the people.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to intervene briefly in the debate in support of the resolution proposed by the Hon. Member for South West Nova (Miss Campbell). As has already been indicated, the disposition of the House is to support voluntary fire departments across the country and those who serve in them. It is well recognized that those involved in volunteer fire departments are under financial disability in providing services. There is no question that their treatment under the Income Tax Act has been less than fair. There does not seem to be a disposition to deal directly with the motion presented by my colleague from South West Nova. In the interest of advancing the cause of volunteer firemen across the country and in the interest of adopting a sensible approach to the problem of taxation in relation to them, as suggested by the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker), the motion ought to be reviewed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) and given full consideration. Therefore I move:

That the contents of the motion proposed by the Hon. Member for South West Nova be presented for consideration to the appropriate standing committee of the House of Commons for consideration by that standing committee.

The motion can be seconded by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) or possibly the Hon. Member for South West Nova.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If I may quote myself and re-quote Beauchesne, as I did earlier, I draw the attention of the Hon. Members to Beauchesne, Citation 435(1), which reads: "It is not an amendment to a motion to move that the question go to a committee." The Hon. Member formulated his motion in the terms "I move that the contents of the motion", which is the same as that the subject matter of a motion "be sent to the appropriate committee for consideration". That type of motion is definitely out of order and, I regret to say, unacceptable. In support of that, I have quoted *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, Fifth Edition.

Miss Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Possibly you could clarify this for the House. A few minutes ago I understood you to say that there are two things that could be done. We could stop debate and the motion would be referred to the Minister of Finance recommending that he consider it, or we could debate it until six o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I draw the attention of Hon. Members to the wording "that in the opinion of this House the Government should consider the advisability". If the House were to accept this, it would be an invitation to the Government to consider the contents of the motion and nothing else.

What the House has to do is either to accept the motion as it has been put or to reject it outright. The amendment proposed by the Hon. Member for Halifax West is out of order. As a matter of parliamentary practice, you do not refer the subject matter of a motion of this nature to a committee. The subject matter is the motion itself. It has to be disposed of here and now. It cannot be disposed of in another place such as a committee of the House. I hope my comments help Hon. Members to appreciate the conundrum we are in.

Mr. Lewycky: Mr. Speaker do I understand it correctly that if there was unanimous consent to this motion at this time, this motion would be given to the Minister of Finance for his consideration?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion reads: "the Government should consider". If the House were to accept the motion, it would then be up to the Government to take whatever action it sees fit. That is all it says.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. This is why I rose on a previous occasion. I was going to make the same point as Your Honour. It is quite unfortunate to find, if one examines Beauchesne or Erskine May, that when the words, "In the opinion of the House the Government should consider the advisability of amending" a certain Act, are used in a motion, whether the motion is or is not talked out, is or is not voted on, it takes no effect as a government motion.

The House is saying that a particular change should take effect. "To consider the advisability" is a very well known term. It has been used for centuries under the British parlia-