

*Official Languages*

I read the words "a third time".

The same rule applies to the question for the Speaker's leaving the Chair or going into Committee of Supply.

I now refer to 202(13):

13. An amendment to alter the main question, by substituting a proposition with the opposite conclusion, is not an expanded negative and may be moved.

I will now read citation 203(5):

5. An amendment was ruled out because it raised a new question which could only be considered on a distinct motion after notice.

I submit this would then qualify the amendment as well. Finally, and this is usually a basket argument, there is the rule of relevancy. An amendment must be relevant and cannot raise a new issue. The amendment sought to be admitted by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek raises a new issue. It raises the constitutionality of the bill. It does not deal with the contents of the bill as such.

For these reasons, I urge that Your Honour hold this amendment to be irrelevant and inadmissible and not pertinent for debate at the third reading stage.

● (4:00 p.m.)

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, believe it or not I had not intended to take part in this debate, but some of the things the Minister of Justice has said prompted me to say just a word, and the word I offer has to do only with the procedural aspect of the amendment. In my view the course suggested by the amendment is not necessary but it seems to me there is a case to be made for the hon. member's right to move it.

The one point I should like Your Honour to consider arises out of the fact that when the Special Committee on Procedure of the House presented its third report on Friday, December 6, 1968, it included in that report paragraphs of comment concerning second reading and third reading. The paragraphs are a bit lengthy, so I do not think it is necessary for me to read them all, but the first of those comments was the view of the committee that the significance of the second reading stage had been exaggerated in the past and that the decisive stage should occur later in a bill's passage after it has emerged from a committee.

Then in the comment on third reading—I am looking at page 433 of *Votes and Proceed-*

*ings* for the date I have indicated—there are these words:

At present the third reading is seldom debated and has become almost a formal stage. Your committee does not envisage that a debate should necessarily take place at the third reading, but it attaches great importance to the preservation of the opportunity for debate at this stage.

Perhaps I should have commenced this quotation by reading the sentence before that which says:

This wording would indicate clearly and unambiguously that the final and most crucial decision relating to the passage of a bill would be taken at the third reading.

The point I wish to make, Mr. Speaker, is that I think some of the citations that are in the authorities have to be looked at again in the light of the changes we have made in our legislative process. In the old days there were citations that said that some of the things that could be done at second reading could not be done at third reading and there were certain precise limits on the third reading stage. But if we have decided as a parliament that third reading is a more important stage, a more crucial stage, and if in practice we debate it more than we used to do, then it seems to me there is a case for providing an opportunity at this stage to raise an issue of importance to the bill.

I do not see that the hon. member has introduced something new into the bill itself. He is simply asking for a delay in order that something might be done before we vote on this third and final reading. I think I made it clear at the outset that I do not look favourably upon the substance of the amendment. Indeed, I do not think it is necessary, but I have pleasure in defending the hon. member's right to move it.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank hon. members for their advice and counsel in respect of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek. Essentially the argument advanced by the Minister of Justice is based on citations in May's 17th edition, which of course have to be taken very seriously, and I think that the Minister of Justice was quite right in bringing this particular difficulty to the attention of the Chair. The argument of the minister is that this kind of amendment cannot be moved on third reading if it goes beyond the scope of the bill itself or, to use the words of May as quoted at page 417:

—a reasoned amendment should not urge the rejection of the bill on the ground of what it omits.