

The hon. member has already quoted paragraph two. In most cases, the Chair in Canada, especially Mr. Speaker Michener, has referred to the first category as a valid definition of a reasoned amendment. This is the foundation I should like to see established in the particular case under consideration. The amendment itself, it seems to me, does not in any way put forward a proposition contradictory to the principle in the bill itself. It first of all raises a complaint against the government, a grievance. It is complained that the bill was not brought in earlier, or that it has been brought in at such a time that its provisions could only come into effect on June 1, 1973. That is a complaint which is not really relevant to the contents of the bill. If the hon. member wished to have that proposition dealt with by the House it should probably come forward as a separate motion.

The second point in the amendment relates to the election period. Well, the election period is established by the Canada Elections Act. There are provisions in that Act establishing the election period, dating from enumeration day until polling day. There is certainly nothing in the bill before us which relates to that; this aspect of the amendment, which seems to me to be the main aspect, is quite outside the scope and provisions of the bill itself.

I am not emotionally attached to the defeat of this amendment on procedural grounds. If it were accepted, it would not bother me greatly except that it seems to me the Speaker has laid the gauntlet down and said: It is time we stopped loose practices and got back to the proper interpretation of what constitutes reasoned amendments. I agree with such an approach. I congratulate him on taking that leadership. I hope that this ruling will establish for the future a proper basis for reasoned amendments and that we shall return to a strict interpretation of the rule in this regard, and, especially, that we shall all understand that reasoned amendments should only be put forward and accepted in cases where the mover and his party are out to defeat a bill. Otherwise, they should not be put forward at all.

Mr. Baldwin: Do I take it, then, that it is the view of the minister in support of the Speaker that a reasoned amendment which otherwise might not be in order would be in order if the mover says: I and my party intend to vote against the bill on second reading. Would that preserve the legality of the motion relating to a reasoned amendment?

Mr. MacEachen: I do not see how the Chair could possibly accept an amendment as being in order merely because the mover says: I am putting forward this amendment and I intend to vote against the bill itself. Besides, I do not think Mr. Speaker or any of us is entitled to ask how an hon. member proposes to deal with the bill itself. I take the position that a second reading reasoned amendment, within the British and Canadian position, is itself an indication on the part of the mover that he is opposed to the principle of a bill and that he is making a motion because he is out to kill the bill. This is absolutely clear in the authorities. It is quite inconsistent to take what is regarded as a lethal step and then, later on, to embrace the bill on second reading. It really is most contradictory and I have been shocked at the loose attitude shown toward parliamentary morality in this area.

Election Expenses Bill

Mr. Baldwin: He might be persuaded by the eloquence shown on the other side.

Mr. Woolliams: What the minister has said means that the whole debating system is a farce.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as another drafter of a great many second reading reasoned amendments, I suppose I should get into this discussion for a few minutes. The President of the Privy Council was almost boasting that his batting average when he was adviser to his party on these matters was low. He indicated that this reflected the difficulty of getting reasoned amendments accepted by the Chair. I do not know what my batting average is, but I know I have been able to get quite a few of them accepted. However, this discussion has developed into an academic review of the whole subject of reasoned amendments rather than sticking to the particular one before us. That is understandable.

For my part, I like the suggestion in the hon. members' amendment that something be done to shorten elections. I thought it was ingenious of the hon. member to get that in by suggesting it might be a way of reducing election expenses. I am aware, though, of the difficulty which both he and the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) are encountering in trying to persuade the Chair that the proposed amendment is in line with our precedents and positions relating to reasoned amendments.

One of the things I find odd is that in Beauséjour we are told that on third reading all amendments which can be made on second reading are in order except certain kinds of amendments. In other words, fewer kinds of amendments are permissible than on second reading. Yet, if we search the records, we will find that it is easier to get third reading amendments accepted than second reading amendments. This underlines the point that the criteria laid down for reasoned amendments on second reading are really not very clear. I therefore support the suggestion of the hon. member for Peace River that despite the expertise you have achieved in these matters, Mr. Speaker, the subject should be given further thought, perhaps not only on the floor of this chamber when these questions come up, but by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

I should like to make this further point. Again, I am supporting the hon. member for Peace River and contending with the President of the Privy Council. I believe it is a fact that we slightly changed the meaning of second reading in December of 1968. At that time what was then the special committee on procedure presented two reports which were companion pieces. One of them made the actual changes in the standing orders, including the change that makes the motion for second reading read that the bill be now read a second time and be referred to such and such a committee. That report was adopted. The other companion report was by way of a commentary. I do not have it in front of me this morning but my memory of it is fairly clear.

• (1230)

In this companion report, we commented on the significance of many of the changes being made. One of the changes on which we commented was this very change