

C-241, An Act to amend the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act (residential mortgages), which was read the first time and ordered to be printed and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Broadbent, seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre), by leave of the House, introduced Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Loan Companies Act (residential mortgages), which was read the first time and ordered to be printed and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Broadbent, seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre), by leave of the House, introduced Bill C-243, An Act to amend the Trust Companies Act (residential mortgages), which was read the first time and ordered to be printed and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Broadbent, seconded by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre), by leave of the House, introduced Bill C-244, An Act to amend the National Housing Act (residential mortgages), which was read the first time and ordered to be printed and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House.

The Order being read for the consideration of a Ways and Means Motion to amend the Excise Tax Act (Sessional Paper No. 291-1/310D) notice of which was laid upon the Table, Tuesday, December 11, 1973;

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton), seconded by Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale), moved,—That the said motion be concurred in.

And a point of order having been raised by the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition to the effect that the notice of Ways and Means should be divided on the ground that it contains more than one proposition;

Mr. Speaker deferred his decision.

The House resumed debate on the motion of Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale), seconded by Mr. MacEachen,—That Bill C-236, An Act to provide a means to conserve the supplies of petroleum products within Canada during periods of national emergency caused by shortages or market disturbances affecting the national security and welfare and the economic stability of Canada and to amend the National Energy Board Act, be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

And debate continuing;

A Message was received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate have passed Bill C-176, An Act to

amend the Criminal Code, the Crown Liability Act and the Official Secrets Act, with the following amendment:

Page 18: Strike out lines 16 to 44, inclusive.

RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: Earlier today when Government Orders were called, the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) raised a point of order as to the validity of the notice of Ways and Means with respect to the Excise Tax Act Tabled in this House on December 11, 1973. The Honourable the Leader of the Opposition sought to persuade the Chair and the House that the notice of Ways and Means should be divided on the ground that it contains more than one proposition, so that honourable Members should be given an opportunity to vote on each separate proposition, if that be the wish of honourable Members. I refer specifically to the opportunity to vote since, according to the Standing Orders, there is no debate on a motion such as this one but only an opportunity to divide.

Honourable Members were generous enough to allow the Chair some time to consider the arguments advanced by the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition and the views expressed at the same time by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen).

As honourable Members know, I am sure, the authority of the Chair in respect of the division of questions is extremely limited. It has never been exercised in relation to the notice of a bill.

The Honourable the Leader of the Opposition did cite as a precedent a decision of Mr. Speaker Macnaughton who divided a motion dealing with the adoption of a national flag on the ground—and this was the finding of Mr. Speaker Macnaughton—that there were two separate questions for the House to consider.

The House will appreciate that, on that previous occasion, the House had before it one single question to be decided in one single step. Members were not considering a bill, or were not considering one of the several steps in the legislative process. However, in the proceeding before us now, the House is asked to consider a formal motion preceding the introduction of a bill or bills founded on the motion.

An examination of precedents confirms that there is no previous occasion when a motion preceding a bill was divided. The hour or more which was allowed to the Chair to look into precedents, citations and Standing Orders was used, with the assistance of the Table, to try to determine whether there were any precedents which might guide us to reach the decision the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition would have liked the Chair to reach.

Honourable Members know there are records of many Ways and Means motions which contain varied and di-