

Canada Assistance Plan

—made a very strong appeal indeed to other opposition parties to support him. Whether he will get that support I do not know. Of course it is a vote of non-confidence and the consequences of the defeat of the government on a vote of non-confidence are obvious under our parliamentary system.

Throughout his argument he took the stand that no matter how desirable it might be, there was a question of priorities that had to be considered, but always returning to one argument, namely, that the motion moved, to which reference has been made, "We respectfully regret that Your Excellency's advisers have omitted to provide for an immediate increase from \$75 per month to \$100 per month for all recipients under the Old Age Security Act," was a vote of non-confidence.

I must say that I find it very difficult to understand why the minister on behalf of the government takes so strong a stand against this amendment. The rules are made, not to bind parliament; they are made for the purpose of assuring that parliament operates efficiently and effectively, and indeed that parliament carries out the will of the nation. That will and desire has been expressed over and over again.

I had hoped, when I asked the question today of the Prime Minister, whether action would be taken before the adjournment, that the answer would have been in the affirmative. However, it was not. If the argument of the Minister of National Health and Welfare is accepted, parliament is to be emasculated, parliament is to be denied the opportunity to vote on something which was not the matter for consideration in January when the amendment was moved. At that time the government took the stand that it was a vote of non-confidence. Today it endeavours to rely on the argument that this is the same matter that was previously decided.

Sir, there have been tremendous changes in the intervening months. According to the record the receipts of the fund exceeded by some \$240 million the payments during the first year that ended on March 31, 1966.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that it is always with great hesitation that I interrupt him, and this is the situation at this time. But I do think we should try to limit the discussion at this time to the point of order. The arguments that are being made now may be most interesting, but I think they are directed more to the substance of the bill than to the point of order.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I have been trying very hard to keep within the rules. I thought that any ancillary remarks that might be placed before you in order to dissociate the amendment of January last, moved by me on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, from the amendment that is now before the house would be matters that deserved consideration. I will put it in a very simple way. I support the argument that has been advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and hope that even now the government in its wisdom will withdraw its strong objection to this amendment and give parliament the opportunity to vote on a matter which ought not to be prevented on a technical objection.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal directly with the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition and I will endeavour to keep strictly to the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition said that the rules were made, and I agree with him, for the proper discharge of the business of the house. It is of course well known that an amendment of this nature, or indeed of any other nature, to the second reading of a bill kills the bill. In other words, what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is doing is preventing parliament, if he is successful in getting this amendment before the house and getting the house to vote for it, from dealing with this measure; he will kill the Canada Assistance Plan and interfere with the orderly progress of the business of the house.

Mr. Knowles: That is not true.

Mr. Pickersgill: It is absolutely true, and the hon. member knows it perfectly well. But it is for Your Honour to decide, not the hon. gentleman. The second point is that the orderly business of the house cannot be conducted if we are to have endless and repetitive debates on the same subject in the same session, when the subject has once been disposed of by the house. An amendment to the second reading of a government measure on which the government has staked its life is just as much a vote of confidence as an amendment to the address—and the right hon. gentleman knows that full well.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: Will the minister allow a question? Is it not possible to move a series of votes of non confidence and stay within the rules?