

Supply

● (1700)

Since the purpose of a subamendment is to alter the amendment, it should not enlarge upon the scope of the amendment but it should deal with matters that are not covered by the amendment; if it is intended to bring up matters foreign to the amendment, the member should wait until the amendment is disposed of and move a new amendment.

I note that the subamendment put forth by the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) brings to the attention of the House three considerations. The first is that he attaches to the amendment now on the floor of the House, a condition. Second, he calls for a white paper on government economic policy. Third, he calls for creation of a special committee. In each of these cases his subamendment would expand upon the amendment of the New Democratic Party.

I will, as I indicated, hear contributions if hon. members see fit. Otherwise, the disposition of the Chair would be to rule the subamendment out of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: I would not want to complicate things, Mr. Speaker, but if ever you should reach the conclusion that one subamendment is in order I would respectfully submit that only one subamendment can be allowed under our Standing Orders when we are debating a business of supply motion. I draw your attention to Standing Order 61 which is quite clear on that subject and which reads as follows:

Only one amendment and one subamendment may be made to a motion proposed in the Budget Debate or to a motion proposed under an order of the day for the consideration of the business of supply on an allotted day.

Today happens to be an opposition day. It is a motion moved under Standing Order 58, so it has to do with the business of supply. It is covered by Standing Order 61, and only one amendment and only one subamendment are in order. So it matters little which amendment you will accept, it does not make any difference to me, but only one subamendment is in order and we object to any additional subamendment.

[*English*]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief because I do not want to impinge upon the members' debating time. Had the Chair gone on to read from the fifth edition of Beauchesne's, not the fourth, in paragraph 439 it sets forth by implication:

—two amendments can be proposed at the same time to a question.

That is the limit. Paragraph 440 says:

As the proposal of an amendment to an amendment originates a fresh subject for consideration, the new question thus created must, to prevent confusion, be disposed of by itself. An amendment, when undergoing alteration, is therefore—

The form and content of subamendments is set forth in paragraph 441, four separate subparagraphs. With great respect to the Chair I submit that the subamendment moved here does not enlarge upon the amendment moved by the NDP; and there is no rule, with respect to the Chair, that prevents a subamendment from placing a condition even if it were to be interpreted as such.

What the subamendment is attempting to do is to enable the substance of the amendment itself to be tested by the demo-

cratic process of public hearings, so that what members of this party have been trying to convince the government on will be conveyed directly to the government through the process of public hearings in committee. That, Mr. Speaker, does not detract one iota from the substance of the amendment put by the leader of the NDP (Mr. Broadbent). Indeed, it would be my speculation that the NDP would welcome the kind of public hearings the subamendment calls for and, indeed, one would think that even a government as stubborn as this one would welcome the kind of public hearings which this party alone has been conducting of its own volition.

Mr. Cosgrove: We want action.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, we want action too, I might tell the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Cosgrove), and that action is to withdraw the budget.

With respect to the Standing Order quoted by the government House leader, that simply confirms that subamendments are permissible. It has long been the practice in this House, particularly on opposition days, to accept subamendments. I have never heard of an objection being taken, whether by the Chair or the government, to the right of the opposition to move a subamendment, because if the logic of the government House leader, and of the Chair with respect, is to be followed it would mean that our amendment in this instance, or an NDP amendment on an opposition day allotted to them, might be completely distorted and given an entirely different sense unless it could be rectified by the subamendment process.

So my submission to the Chair is that the government House leader has simply bolstered my argument by citing the order he does. I might point out to him, in the remote event that the Chair might consider his argument has any logic at all, that we are dealing here with an allotted opposition day, the right of an opposition to test the continued confidence of the House in this budget, this minister and this government.

The subamendment is one which I submit most strongly is totally in order because it does not harm by one iota the substance of the NDP amendment, but merely puts in place a process which, if we can anticipate the evidence to be gathered by such public hearings, if that is acceptable to the House, will do nothing but good and will perhaps finally convince the government of the inadequacy of their budget measures and the deep wounds being caused to the Canadian public as a whole. For those reasons I submit that the Chair accept the motion.

While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I might file a caveat here with respect to the procedures generally that are apparently being followed by the Chair in its interpretation of Standing Order 58(13), where it appears that the Chair is not applying the 20-minute limitation because of an interpretation of the word "motion" in that Standing Order as including an amendment.

If the logic of that interpretation is followed to its ultimate, it would mean, in the case of an amendment and a subamendment, that you would have three 30-minute speeches from that