

The Budget—Mr. Regier

My submission is that citation 199, paragraph 1, and the first sentence in paragraph 4 of the same citation must be read as applying to irregularities which are trivial or without bearing on the main purpose of the motion. With respect, I submit it is only on such a basis that citation 199 is consistent within itself and that the various rulings from the Chair may be reconciled. Where the objectionable features are not trivial I submit there is no power either in the Chair, either before or after the amendment is put, or in the house, without unanimous consent, to sever the objectionable from the unobjectionable portions of an amendment or motion.

Consequently, in summary, it is my submission that the preamble to the amendment is out of order for the reasons I put forward at the last sitting of the house and for the several reasons I have advanced today. It being out of order, the whole amendment is irregular and cannot be rectified without the unanimous consent of the house, and neither the mover nor Your Honour has any authority to make any correction even before the amendment has been put to the house.

Mr. Erhart Regier (Burnaby-Coquitlam): I have a number of observations to make on arguments which have been put forward on this matter. I cannot agree at all with the claim made by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell) on December 21 that the amendment was irregular or that the hon. member who moved it was guilty of too much vagueness. Hon. members will recall that the amendment concluded by saying:

Therefore be it resolved that the financial policies of the government do not deserve the confidence of this country.

That, I submit, is very clear and explicit. However, I have to agree with the new submissions which have been made by the hon. member for Carleton, because it is my belief that in a want of confidence motion, though we may have an argument and a proposal, or an argument or a proposal, these must be brief and must, to use the words of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, contain the subject matter of the proposal or of the argument and not all the substantiating evidence which might be called in aid. If the argument of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate were adopted there would be nothing to prevent my asking that the whole of my last year's budget speech be incorporated in an amendment that I might wish to move. If only the argument of relevancy were used, there would be nothing to prevent a textbook which some economist had written on national finances from being included in the amendment, and being allowed.

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

Let us observe for a moment what happens in a court of law. If the prosecution is able to win a conviction it is only a conviction in respect of the offence as alleged; it is not an endorsement by the presiding officers of each and every detail of the allegations which the lawyer for the prosecution has presented. I feel that relevancy alone is not the guiding consideration, and that in a want of confidence motion there should be only the bare statement of the argument and/or proposal given in its most concise form.

The people of Canada are watching procedure in this House of Commons more closely than ever before, and I should like to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that you have the right to make your decisions independently of decisions which have been made in the past. If errors have been made by speakers in the past I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to make every effort to correct those errors and establish public confidence in our manner of doing business.

I fear I must take exception to the attitude of the hon. member for Carleton during the last part of his remarks, however, because I do believe that an opposition party ought to have rights in this house. Had you made a decision on the amendment, Mr. Speaker, there might be some merit in the proposal now put forward that you ought not to accept any part of the hon. member's amendment. However, because of the fact that you delayed your decision, and because the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River was thereby debarred from moving any other amendment in the course of his address I do not believe the people of Canada would take very kindly to the proposal advanced by the parliamentary secretary, as I understand it, that the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River ought now to be barred from making his amendment in such a manner as would be acceptable to the Chair.

Mr. Pickersgill: Just before you make your decision, Mr. Speaker, may I point out that the hon. member for Carleton did introduce some new arguments in his remarks, and I should like to deal with them briefly. It seems to me that the only argument of consequence made by the hon. member was that the preamble was irrelevant and unnecessary. Then he suggested to Your Honour that, because it was a matter of substance, if it were ruled out the whole amendment would fall.

It seems to me that the parliamentary secretary cannot have it both ways. If the preamble is a matter of substance, as I contend it is, then it should be left as part of the amendment. If, on the other hand, it is a mere matter of verbiage, then it is within the competence of Your Honour, as you did last