

*National Housing Act*

**Mr. Winters:** Mr. Chairman, might I ask what clause we are on now? Am I right in assuming we are on clause 1?

**The Chairman:** Clause 1.

**Mr. Winters:** That deals with home extension loans. I should think I would not be in order under the rules of the house in answering the hon. member, and I would like to be guided, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Green:** Mr. Chairman, the minister raises this particular point, I think, more frequently than any other minister in the cabinet. He must know that it has been the rule here that on the first clause of a bill the discussion has not been limited solely to that clause. That is a right which the opposition cherishes and which in the long run means that legislation gets through much more quickly, because if that were not the case it would mean more extended debate on the other clauses.

My question to the minister has to do with his policy; not the particular wording of any clause, but the policy with regard to projects for housing senior citizens. I suggest that I am in order in asking it.

**The Chairman:** This is a matter which raises a difficult problem in view of the fact that we are governed in committee by the strict rule of relevancy under standing order 59 (2). The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra in his remarks, I believe, used the word "rule" and he also used the word "right". I cannot concede that there is any "rule" allowing a broad debate such as he apparently has in mind, in view of the very clear language of standing order 59 (2).

I might say that in my personal opinion we are governed by the relevancy rule. I have been able to make, up to date, only a partial study of the "custom" in that regard. I have some material in my office and would be very glad to make an enlarged statement on it at a later date. In the present instance, I think the hon. gentleman from Vancouver-Quadra will agree that he is in effect attempting to discuss an alternative. He shakes his head as if he does not agree with that statement; but an alternative, I presume, would be more appropriately discussed when we are discussing the principle of the bill.

I do not wish to say, and in fact I cannot say, anything more at this time except to indicate that I have been giving the question some consideration and would be glad to lay something before hon. members at a later date when I have had a chance to study it more fully.

**Mr. Fleming:** I think it will be agreed that in the earlier stages of this discussion the

[Mr. Green.]

house has been fully co-operative, and I do not think anyone wants to see the discussions and progress today impeded by too technical considerations. The point raised by my colleague from Vancouver-Quadra does give rise to certain questions regarding policy that have a bearing on section 36 of the act. Instead of renewing the discussion we so often have as to whether the rule of strict relevancy is to be applied or whether the custom should prevail of permitting general discussion on the first clause, might I suggest that we are going to lose time by standing on any rule in this matter and that we shall make much more rapid progress if we follow custom and dispose of questions relating to policy on this first clause of the bill.

**The Chairman:** Order. I might say that the result of the meagre inquiries I have made to date into this matter neither establishes nor denies a custom, but until I can make a lengthier and more comprehensive statement to hon. members I am inclined to agree with the position taken by the hon. member for Eglinton, and I believe if hon. members co-operate we can perhaps make progress in that way at the present time. I must say to hon. members that until that statement has been made I hope they will not consider that we are establishing a precedent for the future.

**Mr. Green:** Perhaps I could now have the answer to my question.

**Mr. Winters:** I do not mind answering any questions, Mr. Chairman, when they are in order. I think the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra is perhaps labouring under a misunderstanding. Normally when a bill is introduced there is a first clause which is rather general in nature. For example, in the housing act the first clause is:

This act may be cited as the National Housing Act, 1954.

I understand that in such a case it has been customary to have general remarks and questions on the first clause. This bill seems rather different, in that the first clause is very specific in having to do with the deletion of the home extension loan provision under part 4 of the act. I therefore questioned whether I was in order in answering general questions under a specific clause. I do not think there has been any practice established in the committee which would indicate that that is the situation, but where a bill has been introduced with a first clause of a general nature I do acknowledge that a practice has developed. But if the committee wishes me, subject to