

Economic Relations with United States

such an amendment. It is the point I had raised at the outset when I reserved my decision. In my opinion it was important for an hon. member to insist on that point and show the danger of making the rules of this House flexible to the point where they lose their importance.

[English]

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said in his argument that although he saw some difficulty, since he blamed the motion itself for touching two subject matters, he seemed to expect from the hon. member for Peace River a silent acceptance of the amendment. I must tell the hon. member that the Chair cannot make a judgment on the mere fact that one party would find it possible at some time or another to vote for or against the amendment or to approve completely or more strongly disapprove of the amendment. I think the question in front of us is more important than that. The reason the Chair has made this point is that it felt this might be a good opportunity for us to establish some kind of guidelines to help opposition parties in further debates and in the preparation of their motions on opposition days as well as in the preparation of amendments.

I still feel that the rule of relevancy, whether in a debate on an opposition day or any other kind of debate, is the basic rule of debate in the democratic process of this House, although it is more difficult to apply that rule when a motion before the House covers two different matters, or matters which though related could be treated separately or debated separately. However, I think the point made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is very well taken. At the same time, he said that the acceptance of this amendment is a matter of judgment. Again I say that that judgment cannot be based on the kind of point made by the hon. member for Peace River.

The Chair has listened to the views that were expressed and has again read the motion put by the hon. member for Hillsborough, but I must say that the position of the Chair has been one of hesitation. At first when the motion was put to me, it was my intention to warn the House of the kind of difficulty in which it was putting itself by presenting such an amendment, and there were some guidelines that I wanted to offer hon. members either for the preparation of amendments or for motions put on such occasions.

While the procedural debate went on I made a further study of what was basically in the motion and in the amendment and became more and more convinced that it would be very difficult for me at this time to accept the amendment in its present form. Taking into account the fact that this debate will go on for two days, I feel that I should invite the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre or any other member from his party, in order to protect the House and its procedure, to take a later opportunity of presenting a modified amendment. Alternatively, he may want to accept the proposition that has been put by the hon. member for Peace River to eliminate the words after "United States" and have the amendment begin after those words. In that case, it would be my feeling that he would leave in the motion of the official opposition the first proposition, which I think is the crux of what the representative of that party wanted to bring to the attention of this House.

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel).]

If the hon. member for Peace River does not accept the suggestion made by the Chair at this time I have no alternative but to refuse the amendment.

Mr. Baldwin: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not accept it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, you seem to have made two suggestions and we are prepared to follow either one of them. The simplest suggestion, of course, is that the amendment be not accepted and that our next speaker try again, bearing in mind the points made by the Chair. On the other hand, considering your other suggestion, if it were acceptable to the Chair that the amendment delete only those words in the middle of the motion, namely "for failing to employ and improve firm and constructive economic and political relations with the United States" and substitute the words "for failing to respond adequately and effectively to the protectionist measures introduced unilaterally by the United States", my colleague for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands would be prepared to alter the amendment accordingly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): This is not the suggestion that the Chair had in mind, nor the suggestion which was made by the hon. member for Peace River. I think the best solution would be for the hon. member and his party to look at the question again and that their next speaker bring in a motion that would meet the rules and requirements of the procedures of the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Thank you, Sir, that is what we will do.

• (4:40 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, we now have the opportunity of considering a motion allowing us to determine where we stand in the relationships that exist between the government of Canada and that of the United States. It is important that we may immediately bring to light certain facts regarding those relationships because it would be a sad day if we were to wake up one morning and realize that they have aggravated to the point of creating a disruptive or disastrous situation.

Mr. Speaker, the whole Canadian nation is aware of the fact that the relationships between the Canadian government and the United States are not so good. They have been better in the past. This is due to several factors, and may I be permitted to single out a few of them. First, despite its relatively small population compared with the United States, Canada is of course always at a disadvantage if one looks at this population differential, and of course it is very difficult to set up a policy in the present system. May I say in passing that if we had a system different from the one we now have those problems could not exist or would be much smaller in any case.

Because of this situation, we find it difficult to gain a degree of economic independence. We must, despite our efforts to reach economic independence, continue to abide by most of the decisions taken by American high finance. It is therefore not easy, in the light of such a factor, to improve our relations if we aim at reducing more and more the American share in our economy.