

Unemployment Insurance Act

The same can be said about the other points the hon. member made in his first point of order. I have some difficulty in knowing how to understand his point of order described in the form of an amendment. Clearly one is simply a repetition of the other and they should fall together. He spoke about the question of whether or not the item was a budgetary or a non-budgetary item in relation to the requirements of the government to raise revenue. This surprises me, coming as it does from the hon. member who has been reading the budgets and statements of the ministers of finance both in this government and its predecessor and the clear indications that total cash requirements, rather than the simple, rather old-fashioned, view of budgetary and non-budgetary items, are the key to the requirement of the government in the way of taxation. In the course of putting his amendment to the House, he made reference to this material. I suggest that it would be rather bad practice to allow the hon. member to include such allegations in an amendment which, if kept in a much simpler form, would be in order. In that simpler form, it would disclose the desire of hon. members opposite, perhaps, to stop the bill from proceeding in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Nielsen: Would the minister permit a question with regard to the discussion on the first point of order? He heard me deal with the matter of the use of the word "authorized" in clause two of the bill. Surely, he must agree that the use of that word anticipates the authorization of that item in the Supplementary Estimates by the committee, and if that be so, it is clearly anticipatory.

Mr. Lang: I thank the hon. member for drawing my attention to it. In view of the existence of the words in the Financial Administration Act which require that matters contained in warrants be contained in subsequent supplementary estimates, there is a need to deal with them in this fashion in certain circumstances in relation to a bill such as the Unemployment Insurance Commission bill. It could not happen in most cases, but I think that is a fair explanation of that word in this case.

• (1640)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a brief but serious contribution to the discussion of both of these points of order. However, before I get serious I wonder whether I could make the remark that if my hon. friend's point of order about the House having no right to continue with this debate is sustained, then we cannot even consider his amendment. So perhaps Your Honour would be saved the problem of ruling on this amendment if you were to rule that we cannot continue with the debate at this time.

I may say also that I support the contention of the hon. member for Yukon that it might be a good idea for the debate to continue until five o'clock, leaving Your Honour the opportunity, between five o'clock and eight o'clock, to do some homework. I am sure that the gentlemen at the table who serve us so well are used to going without their dinners; I can see that they will have some homework to do this evening.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the point as to whether or not we should proceed with this bill, I confess I have been

[Mr. Lang.]

wracking my brain trying to recall something that has happened in this area, but I am sure that the gentlemen at the table will be able to find it. I believe there have been rulings that would support the contention of my hon. friend to this extent, that it would not be procedurally correct for the House of Commons to give the bill third and final reading—in other words, not possible to pass the bill finally—if it contained in it a reference to something that was not at that point a fact. I do not think we could give third and final reading to the bill until the House had authorized the supplementary estimate referred to therein.

However, it seems to me that that does not interfere with the right of this House and of the committee, if the bill is referred thereto, to proceed with the earlier stages of this legislation. I make that assertion because I am quite confident that a similar ruling has been made a number of times in the past. All you have to do, Mr. Speaker, is to ask your able assistants to find those precedents and then you can give a learned ruling from the Chair tonight at eight o'clock, just as if you had poured over the matter yourself for three hours.

If I may turn now to the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Yukon, it does pose some difficulty for the Chair. However, on balance, relying on that old cliché about giving an hon. member the benefit of the doubt, I think you will have great difficulty in ruling it out of order.

If this amendment merely read that this House—missing out all that verbiage—resolves that Bill C-124 be not now read a second time but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, then there would be no question that it would be in order. To use a phrase that I used the other day, if the pith and substance of this amendment were simply that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the committee, then of course that is in order. But I wonder whether it is in order to import between the first two words and the pith and substance at the end all of the argument and debate contained in the many words in this amendment?

I would differ very strongly with the assertions that are contained in the verbiage of the amendment. That does not bother me, because I do not think that the bill should be delayed in this way and I shall vote against the amendment, if it is in order, because I think that instead of referring the subject matter to the committee we should pass the bill itself. However, I do not think it is good form to import into what is otherwise a proper amendment a couple of paragraphs of argument and debate.

I often give this advice to some of my colleagues when they are drafting motions to present under Standing Order 43, although no matter how one drafts them there seem to be difficulties. The problem is where you draw the line between what is debate or preamble and what is the actual motion. In this case I think the hon. member has put too much debate and argument, which I refute, into his motion, although I concede that that may not invalidate it. If it does, then all the hon. member has to do is to ask to strike out all the verbiage, and simply move that this House deny second reading of the bill and refer the subject matter thereof to the committee. As I say,