

Canada Assistance Plan

has in it words which state that its purpose is to assist people who are in difficulty because of a number of reasons, one of them being age. There are various provisions in the bill with respect to the needs of older people and I submit, therefore, that an amendment which proposes to deal with those needs of older people in some other way than is proposed in the bill is relevant to the principle and the purpose.

The minister argued under this general heading that there are a number of other categories of people alluded to in the bill, and that if this amendment were in order it would open the door to a series of amendments. I submit that is not a basis upon which an amendment should be ruled out of order. If an amendment that is in order makes it possible for one, two or a dozen other amendments to be moved, that is not an argument against the validity of the first one.

In my submission we are dealing with the problem of needs, and we are dealing with those needs on a broad basis. The bill specifically refers to the needs of older people and age is specifically mentioned. It is my submission, therefore, that an amendment dealing with the amount of pension that we make available to our older people is relevant to the purpose and principle of this bill and, therefore, it should be allowed as being in order.

The minister raised as his second argument the fact that early in this session there were votes in this House of Commons on the question of raising the amount of the old age pension and lowering the age. He therefore suggested that this amendment runs counter to the rule that one cannot again in a session ask for a decision on a matter concerning which a decision has already been taken. Let me remind the house that we did our best during that earlier debate to make the point that the issue was in respect of the amount of old age pension, and we appealed to members to vote on the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) and the subamendment proposed by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), on the basis that the issue of the pension amount was before the house. We were told then by hon. members on the other side of the house, and in another corner, that that was not the question before us and that we were not voting on old age pensions, but voting on a matter of

[Mr. Knowles.]

confidence or non-confidence in the government. We have been reminded of that fact at least a dozen times during the course of this session.

The government and others who took that position cannot have things both ways. They cannot argue in January that what was before the house was not a question of old age pensions—

Mr. MacEachen: Why do you not read the amendment? That is what was before the house.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Health and Welfare does not accept my proposition that he cannot have it both ways. He is in power, so he is going to have it both ways. He and his colleagues, including the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), argued in January that what was before the house at that time was not the old age pension question, but a question of confidence or non-confidence in the government. That argument has been repeated time and time again. I submit that, morally, they cannot have it both ways; they cannot argue in January that the motion then was one of non-confidence and not on the question of pensions, and now say that this matter has already been decided.

It is my submission that if on the earlier occasion we voted on a motion of confidence or non-confidence in the government, this is in fact a different motion we are now raising in respect of an increase in the amount of pensions and the lowering of the age at which the pension is to be paid, not in the context of confidence or non-confidence in the government, but in the context of the issue which has been brought before us by a piece of government legislation dealing with the whole question of the social needs of our people.

Incidentally, the citation from which the minister read, and this often happens with things that he reads, had another sentence. He read citation 163 which consists of two sentences, although he read only one. The other sentence of that citation reads as follows:

It is possible, however, so far to vary the character of a motion as to withdraw it from the operation of the rule.

The wording of my amendment does differ from the wording of the amendment proposed in January, but I am not arguing that the difference in wording is sufficient to withdraw the motion from the application of the rule. I submit, however, that the character of