

Employment Support Bill

that we are now operating under different rules. Many of the arguments and precedents cited with regard to acceptance of such amendments are based on rules of the House that no longer are applicable. It must be remembered that we no longer have a resolution that is debatable in this House. I agree that a resolution could be amended within limited terms, but under the present rules this is the first opportunity that any member of the House has to put forward an amendment. Merely to say that there shall be a six months' hoist, which is tantamount to a negative vote, or any kind of dressed up motion, shall I say, which has the same effect really as voting against a motion on second reading, is to me far too restrictive.

It seems to me that what we have done has been to change our rules to shorten the "front end load", which is a phrase that I used to use in committee. We have very definitely eliminated the front end load of the legislative process. But any application of rules that belong to our older, abandoned generation of rules is wrong. It seems to me that if an amendment is a reasoned one and does not fall into the quicksands of difficulty illustrated by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, then I think it should be possible to put an amendment of this nature at this stage.

I am arguing merely as to the right of a member of the House to put forward this kind of amendment. There are many features of this proposed amendment that is now under consideration which I would find entirely repugnant and which I would not accept; but that is as to subject matter, not as to technicality.

For these reasons I urge Your Honour to look upon this type of amendment in a light different from that heretofore since we are now working under new rules. I would hope there could be some consideration given this particular aspect during the dinner hour and then the Chair could give the House the benefit of its mature reflection upon such an amendment as this.

Mr. J. A. Jerome (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to address myself solely to the question whether the proposed amendment offends the rule that has been so frequently spoken of here this afternoon of not being an outright rejection of the bill, or not negating the bill, or not being contrary to the bill itself, as the situation has variously been described by those who spoke on the validity of the amendment.

If it is the intention of the proposers of the amendment, as they say it is, to make up for inadequacies in the bill, for the lack of certain measures that they feel should be taken to effect the intended objectives of the bill, then it is obvious that they are at liberty to propose specific measures by way of amendment at committee stage, as I am certain they are preparing to do. Obviously that would be the correct, legal way to achieve such objective.

When one examines the terms of this proposed amendment, one would agree as a matter of commonsense that the only sensible, intelligent interpretation of the words "That Bill C-262 be not now read a second time but that

it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the government should give consideration to the introduction of measures" is that the bill should be withdrawn. The effect of that language I have quoted would be the withdrawal of the bill as a result of action from that side of the House instead of from this side.

● (5:20 p.m.)

The amendment suggests that the bill do not now proceed but that it be withdrawn from the House with another new and larger measure being considered by the government for introduction at some other time. In my humble opinion, the only sensible interpretation of those words is exactly that interpretation, the effect of which is not only an outright rejection of the bill, negating or going contrary, but a complete withdrawal of it from the chamber. Your Honour knows very well, as do the hon. members who have spoken in support of this amendment, that this can only be achieved with the unanimous consent of the House. I suggest that is the clearest argument which points out the illegality of this measure. Perhaps the strongest attestation of that is that if Your Honour accedes to and goes along with that interpretation, what you will in effect be doing is sweeping aside the first three of the four points put forward in the motion and going directly to the fourth point at the bottom of the page, which is an exact description of the intent of this bill, that is to protect Canadian jobs from the consequences of policies announced by the President of the United States. I think that is the task we should get on with as quickly and as directly as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there is no other hon. member who wishes to assist the Chair regarding the amendment, perhaps I should make some comments. The Chair thanks the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) for his assistance. He has been very helpful, but the Chair feels that unless there is some other argument or doubt created in my mind there is no real purpose in deferring the decision regarding this procedural argument over the dinner hour. In any event, I thank hon. members, particularly the hon. member for Edmonton West, for their assistance.

I have some difficulty in respect of arguments in view of the precedents and authorities which bind the Chair in matters of procedure. If the bill under consideration and the motion before the Chair were different, it might well be that the hon. member for Edmonton West could impress the present occupant of the Chair with his argument. In these particular circumstances, I feel I must be bound by those precedents cited by hon. members who have presented arguments. They must, of course, all be considered by the Chair in the determination of a procedural argument such as this.

When I heard the motion I did indicate some doubt about two points, and at that time I asked for assistance. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has cited the authority of May's Seventeenth Edition. I do not think it is necessary for me to review the authorities that hon. members drew to the attention of the Chair. I think it is sufficient at this time for the

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]