

Canada Assistance Plan

but it is one of such tremendous importance, it seems to me, that I will try briefly to put to you one or two extra points which I do not think have yet been made.

There are three objections which have been noted. The first is that it is said that this house has already dealt with the matter and disposed of it on January 20. Such an argument does not depend, I submit, on the precise words of the motion that the house dealt with at that time as compared with the motion that the house is asked to deal with now. If the context has substantially changed and the circumstances have changed then you are not, I submit, dealing substantially with the same matter.

Citation 194 of Beauchesne's fourth edition which deals with this question, is as follows:

A motion or amendment cannot be brought forward which is the same in substance as a question which has already been decided—

It is said, Mr. Speaker, that on January 20 this house decided that it would not increase old age pensions to \$100 a month. I want to put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that in all common sense the situation has substantially changed since then. Things do not remain at a standstill in the country for six months. There has been an increase in the cost of living, a fact well known to all members of the house. The Minister of Finance also brought this fact out in his budget; and there is the threat of inflation. There is no one more clearly the victim of this than those to whose interests this motion is directed.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that as the cost of living and the cost of housing and shelter rise a new situation entirely presents itself today, in June, which is different from the situation to which the previous motion in January was directed, and of which the house disposed. It seems to me that this is only common sense and it fits in with what was said by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

Is it to be said that because we dealt with this matter verbally in January—and this is quite apart from the argument that in January a vote of confidence motion was moved, whereas this is a different sort of vote; I am not talking about the change in any verbal sense in context, or about the precise way in which the house dealt with the matter then—that today, when circumstances have altered, the elderly people to whom reference is made in this amendment are in substantially the same position, and that an amendment at this stage would be out

of order? If necessary, I will be prepared to call as a witness the Minister of Finance, who would testify to the fact that the danger of inflation has grown and that the cost of living has increased, particularly in relation to the cost of food and rent, thus affecting the people to whom this motion is directed.

The second argument that has been advanced is that this motion is not relevant. Surely that argument is impossible on two counts.

Mr. MacEachen: Strictly relevant.

Mr. Brewin: Strictly relevant? Surely that argument is incorrect on at least two grounds. The first ground is that it is contrary to ordinary common sense. The Canada Assistance Plan has been put forward by the government as its answer to the problems of the elderly people. Some members of this house do not believe that it is an adequate answer. Surely when the government brings forward for second reading a measure which it says, in part at any rate, is designed to meet the needs of the elderly people of this country, it is relevant for the members of this house who happen to differ from that opinion to express their views on the matter.

Apart altogether from that, how can it be argued that a matter which falls, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre pointed out, precisely within what a member is entitled to do on second reading of a bill, is irrelevant? I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, once again of citation 382 of Beauchesne which is as follows:

It is also competent to a member who desires to place on record any special reasons for not agreeing to the second reading of a bill, to move as an amendment to the question, a resolution declaratory of some principle adverse to, or differing from, the principles, policy, or provisions of the bill, or expressing opinions as to any circumstances connected with its introduction—

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, is certainly directed to, and connected with, the circumstances of the introduction of this bill. When the citation to which I have referred specifically states that this type of amendment can be introduced at this time, how can it possibly be argued that it is irrelevant? I have often been amazed in this house at the width of the rules of relevancy extended from time to time; but on this particular occasion, for the reason that it is embarrassed by this amendment, the government is trying to put before us a ruling as to relevancy which runs strictly contrary to the established principles in this house.