

Water Resources Programs

• (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker: I have looked at the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) and I hope it does not come as a surprise to him that there are some procedural difficulties which I am sure he has himself suspected. It would be of assistance to me if he made an argument in support of the acceptability of the motion. My reservations and misgivings have to do, first, with the question of relevancy, and second, with the financial initiative of the Crown. I believe there are serious difficulties in relation to both aspects of the motion.

I know the hon. member has given the matter serious thought. Perhaps he would like to assist the Chair in reaching a decision in this regard.

Mr. Aiken: With regard to the two matters that Your Honour has raised, I did have some misgivings because it is the type of problem that we meet under the present rules and on third reading. Nevertheless, with regard to the propriety or relevancy of the amendment, what we are asking is not that any principle of the bill be changed, but merely that a parliamentary committee already in existence—it could be the standing committee on National Resources and Public Works—have under continuing scrutiny the operation of its act we are now considering. This will give us sufficient supervision over the management of the water resources since no other body is set up for the purpose. I think it is essential on this basis for the minister and the department to have some sort of guidance regarding the effect that this act will have, the regulations that are made under it and the general policy that is followed, in the same manner as various other bodies. Although we have tried to set up a separate commission or body outside the House in other amendments to this bill, they have been ruled out because further expenditure would be involved. In this amendment, we are merely providing for supervision within the House and I believe we are not altering the principle of the bill in any respect.

With regard to the financial implications, the amendment does not require the committee to report any additional expenditures unless a further recommendation is made by His Excellency the Governor General. This is exactly the procedure that has already been accepted in other provisions in the bill. As a matter of fact, we had to have about four recommendations of His Excellency the Gov-

ernor General on amendments introduced by the government in the committee. At that time it was felt that the amendments could be moved if a new recommendation were made by the Governor General, and this was presented to the House along with the government's amendments to involve itself in additional capital costs or projects.

This amendment provides that the committee merely request a further recommendation by His Excellency the Governor General. This is surely within the committee's powers because a committee has already done it, not only in some other bill but in this bill as well. The bill was then amended and was brought back to the House at the report stage. There was no objection to this procedure because the amendment was one which we felt was in order, and we asked the government to involve itself in this sort of thing. I am merely saying that this precedent has already been established in the standing committee. If the amendment is accepted, as I am proposing that it should be, then the committee will have to re-consider the whole question of the scrutiny of the water resources of Canada, and in that case the recommendation would be made.

I have not referred to citations with regard to those two points because Your Honour is well versed on the matter of amendments on third reading, but I do believe that this is a form of amendment that could very well be accepted, particularly if the committees of the House are to have any relevance at all and any meaning.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I might be allowed at this point to express my views. I respect the hon. member's knowledge of the rules and his understanding of procedure, and I always listen with every possible consideration and with attention to the views he expresses from time to time when procedural matters are raised in the House. This is why I hesitate at this point to disagree with the views he has expressed, but I have come to the conclusion that even in the light of the very strong and cogent arguments he has submitted for the consideration of the Chair it would be very difficult to accept the amendment which he proposes at present.

I have indicated to him in a summary way that there are two difficulties. One of them deals with relevancy. This, of course, has nothing to do with the new rules. It is a long standing practice that an amendment on third reading has to be particularly relevant to the