

I should say that in connection with reasoned amendments, as with all other amendments and motions, it is the duty of the Chair to enforce the principle of relevancy and it is the responsibility of honourable Members, as participants in the parliamentary process, to observe and respect that principle. That is the condition which honourable Members must meet in proposing a reasoned amendment which in effect is not an expanded negative. If a reasoned amendment, is but an expanded negative it is, of course, well known that honourable Members may express their objection or opposition to such motion by voting against it. If an amendment goes beyond the four corners of the bill before the House, it offends the principle of relevancy. Therefore, in my view, it will not surprise honourable Members to learn that it is difficult from a procedural standpoint to propose acceptable reasoned amendments.

I think honourable Members expect the Chair to ensure that Parliamentary debates remain logical, meaningful and relevant. Therefore, the Chair must look with the utmost caution on so-called reasoned amendments.

The honourable Member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) suggested that the time has come to enlarge the opportunity for debate. I suggest to him and to all other honourable Members that this is not a responsibility of the Chair. If honourable Members wish to have the rules changed to provide for enlarged debate, they themselves will have to change the rules which guide the Chair.

Having said that, I am prepared to look at the amendment with much sympathy and tolerance. The honourable Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), having listened to my going into some detail in order to explain why the amendment is perhaps out of order and should not be accepted, will no doubt be surprised when I tell him that I am ready to accept it. The reason is that it is perhaps a borderline case. I admit that it is very difficult. And moreover, it has been very difficult for some time to determine which reasoned amendments ought to be accepted and which ought to be refused. This one, I suggest to the House, is a borderline case.

In view of the fact that the matter of reasoned amendments is being reviewed by the Chair, perhaps honourable Members would wish that he would exercise some leniency and allow debate on the reasoned amendment. At the same time, I would like to stress that honourable Members should not think that the way has been opened for all possible reasoned amendments which would result in making parliamentary debate just about impossible.

I might say that I suspect whether or not the amendment is before us, the debate which will take place tonight and perhaps in subsequent days will pretty well turn around the points which have been raised in the amendment. I think it would be very difficult for the Chair to rule out of order considerations which relate in some way to the substance of the reasoned amendment now before us.

We may have a test as to whether we are making a mistake by accepting that reasoned amendment by a sub-amendment which may be proposed later and which might indicate how far away we would be getting from the motion now before the House. However, that could be a test which might be useful as a guide to the Speaker on future occasions.

Having said all that and having invited honourable Members to realize the difficulty with which the Chair is faced in this situation, I feel in the circumstances that I should allow the amendment and put it to the House.

I repeat to honourable Members that in the next few days I will continue to consider the general matter of reasoned amendments. The next time one is submitted we may have a set of rules which will establish when, how and in what circumstances such amendments may be accepted. I am afraid that it might make it more difficult for honourable Members to propose amendments which will be acceptable in view of the precedents.

Having said this, if honourable Members will allow, I will now read for the benefit of the House the motion proposed by the honourable Member for Edmonton West, seconded by the honourable Member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Ricard):

"That all the words after 'That' be struck out and the following substituted:

'this House deeply concerned with unacceptable levels of inflation, persisting unemployment and stagnant industry and conscious of the necessity for meaningful tax reform declines to give second reading to a bill which does not provide sufficient stimulus to the economy of Canada with appropriate tax cuts and incentives, does not contain adequate tax exemptions and is not calculated to materially improve business and labour conditions in Canada now or in the foreseeable future.'

And the said amendment having been proposed from the Chair;

RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Before the honourable Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) is given the floor, I would like to refer briefly to the procedural objection he took this afternoon to some aspects of the bill now before us. The difficulties with which the Chair is faced in this situation were also referred to this afternoon by the honourable Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He and the honourable Member for Edmonton West suggested that the terms of the bill before us are, in a substantive way, different from the provisions of the schedule which was attached to the Ways and Means motion. Probably he may be right. I say "probably" because it will take the Chair a long time to analyse the 560 or so pages of the bill and collate them with the schedule attached to the Ways and Means motion. I suggest to honourable Members that the Chair should not be requested to do that.