

Canada Assistance Plan

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in a sense is a multiple choice amendment, because the way the amendment itself is drafted it presents a variety of courses to show that it does not fall within the standard rules of the house on motions which are admissible, or amendments which are admissible on the second reading of a bill.

Mr. Speaker, may I first refer to the necessity that any amendment moved on second reading must be strictly relevant to the principle of the bill. It is not sufficient that the amendment be connected with the bill or in the same general field; it must be strictly relevant to the principle of the bill. The principle of this bill is to provide public assistance to persons in need in Canada. The amendment moved by the hon. gentleman proposes a separate and a new scheme that is not strictly relevant to the principle of the bill. It is true, Mr. Speaker, that there is a provision in this bill by which assistance may be given to older citizens who are in need; but if that permits the hon. gentleman to have this amendment accepted, then it could be permissible for another hon. gentleman to get up and suggest that the house consider immediately an alternative scheme for the provision of increases in family allowances, because there is a provision in the bill by which assistance can be given to children in need.

There is also a provision in the bill by which assistance can be given to unemployed persons if they are in need. If the amendment moved by my hon. friend is in order, then it would be proper, through the method employed by him, for another hon. gentleman to move an amendment that an alternative scheme be brought in amending the Unemployment Insurance Act to increase the extent and duration of benefits. What I am attempting to illustrate is that the amendment is not strictly relevant to the bill itself, because if this amendment were accepted it would open the door for a series of further amendments affecting every social welfare scheme on the statute books of Canada.

I should also like to refer to the fact that already this session the house has dealt substantially with the question proposed by my hon. friend. May I refer to citation 163 at page 137 of Beauchesne's fourth edition which states:

A mere alteration of the words of a question, without any substantial change in its object will

not be sufficient to evade the rule that no question shall be offered which is substantially the same as one which has already been expressed in the current session.

The first amendment moved when the house resumed was an amendment moved by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) regretting that Your Excellency's advisors have omitted to provide for an immediate increase from \$75 per month to \$100 per month for all recipients under the Old Age Security Act.

Mr. Starr: On what date was that?

Mr. MacEachen: January 20, 1966. While there are minor changes in the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, its object is substantially the same as the object of the amendment moved by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition. The house already has taken a decision on this question early in the session. The rule exists in order to avoid the house, in a single session making contradictory decisions.

• (3:50 p.m.)

We have already dealt with this question and the house has made a decision. Therefore I submit it cannot be posed again on this occasion. I say that for that reason, and for the reason which I earlier stated, this amendment itself is not strictly relevant to the provisions of the bill.

Let me summarize the two grounds for arguing that the amendment is inadmissible. First, it is not strictly relevant to the principle of the bill and, second, the house has already taken a decision on the question posed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), and it is not proper to ask the house again to render a decision on this same question, because the decision could be contradictory to the one already taken.

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether it was January 12 when the Liberal party voted against an increase in old age pensions?

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, in respect of the first argument advanced by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) I suggest that it is a matter of judgment, and this is where the responsibility of the Chair comes into the picture, as to whether or not the subject matter of my amendment is relevant to the principle and the purpose of the bill. I submit for Your Honour's consideration the fact that the bill