

Income Tax

● (1640)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I invite the parliamentary secretary, who seems to wish to make some comment on the amendment, to address the Chair I think there is a technicality that should be corrected. The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) said that this motion was seconded by the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Bawden), who has already spoken in the debate and cannot second the motion.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I would be very pleased to second the hon. gentleman's motion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Then the motion is seconded by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker).

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, this amendment falls within the category of reasoned amendments. I am sure Your Honour heard the ruling by Mr. Speaker on a similar reasoned amendment in the House an hour or so ago. I submit to Your Honour that the argumentation made by Mr. Speaker at that time also applies, generally speaking, to this particular amendment which has been moved by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence).

In addition to the decision made by Mr. Speaker, there is another factor here of some importance concerning the financial impact the amendment would have upon the revenue of the Government of Canada. If we reduce taxes we automatically decrease the amount of revenue the government has entitlement to under the tax laws.

Mr. Lawrence: That is precisely why I moved it.

Mr. Reid: It would make a substantial change in the budgetary position of the federal government and would lead to a series of other factors as well. The general rule has been that members can lower expenditures but not increase them. I would argue that what the hon. member is in fact doing by virtue of his amendment violates that general principle.

The second argument I would make is that it is an anticipation of an opportunity that hon. members will have at a later point in the proceedings to deal directly and specifically with the clauses to which they take exception. I base the main weight of my argument upon that point, for it is quite clear, if and when this bill ever clears second reading, that we will embark upon a clause by clause discussion of the bill, and at that point the clauses dealing with tax increases or deductions will be before the House. Thus, the House will have the opportunity, specifically and directly, to deal with the clauses to which hon. members opposite take exception.

Therefore, I submit this amendment does not come within the recognized classes of reasonable amendments which this House has accepted in the past. It is an anticipation of an opportunity hon. members will have, as soon as the bill clears second reading, to discuss the clauses directly and effectively, and I might say in a form much more effective and important than the way in which the hon. member has put forward his objections. However, my

[Mr. Lawrence.]

main argument against the amendment is that it is anticipating the status of the bill at a future time in this House, and by interpretation and by judgment of previous speakers this clearly should not be allowed.

Mr. Lawrence: If I may speak to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, do I gather it is Your Honour's intention to rule on the amendment now, or are you going to take the matter under advisement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have invited argument and I permitted the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) to put forward an argument regarding the acceptability of the amendment or otherwise. I am also inviting other hon. members who are interested to comment on the acceptability of the amendment. After listening to those arguments I will decide whether I am in a position to make a decision. I cannot prejudge what will be said by hon. members.

Mr. Lawrence: Then may I comment, sir, in reverse order, on the matters raised by the parliamentary secretary? First of all, the last point that he made—and no wonder it was last—was that because a matter can be dealt with in another way at a later stage of a bill's progress through the legislative and parliamentary system, it obviously must therefore be out of order at this stage. I submit to Your Honour that is a ridiculous proposition and in no way bears upon the validity or non-validity of the amendment that I have just put before the House. In his second to last point the hon. member kept referring to the amendment as a "reasonable" amendment. Of course, the proper terminology is "reasoned" amendment, not "reasonable". There are grave differences between reasoning something out and being reasonable; if the hon. member does not know that, he should.

I am having a hard time remembering his points, Mr. Speaker, because they really did not bear, I feel, in any manner, shape or form upon whether this particular amendment is in order or not. I believe the first point he made was that it was out of order because it called for a reduction in governmental revenue. Presumably the hon. member is some sort of "pseudo voice" for collective government opinion, but I find that one of the most astounding propositions to come from such a source as he. First of all, the very purpose of the amendment is to reduce government revenue; there is no question about that. From time immemorial in the British Parliamentary system, this, so far as I know, has been a very valid purpose, if not the real duty and responsibility, of oppositions. They do exactly that by reason of amendments such as this.

I think that the hon. member, as he so frequently is, is entirely confusing this with getting approval in principle by His Excellency of any increase in taxation. Obviously that has to be done. Any increase in expenditure has to receive approval in advance from His Excellency. I submit that if the hon. member does not appreciate that there is a difference between a private member of the House bringing forward an enactment asking the House to approve an increase in expenditure, and an amendment such as mine, which asks for a reduction in revenue, then I would tell him that he does not deserve to have the position he has in the government of this country.