

Order Paper Questions

Mr. Speaker, we can abolish the legislative process and just bring in a couple of sets of supplementary estimates over the course of year, put in a string of \$1 items and—

Mr. Mazankowski:—shut the place down.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, shut the place down, as my hon. friend says.

Mr. Abbott: It would not put you in *Weekend* magazine if they shut you down.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): All I can say to my hon. friend is that jealousy will get him nowhere.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): You are in enough trouble now with the competition bill.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The minister will find *Canadian* magazine annoyed with him now for having used the wrong name. Here, under the Post Office, is a \$1 item by which we set aside the provisions of the Olympic (1976) Act.

I have picked out three items, Mr. Speaker, which my friends to the right have identified, and I think that in all cases they go beyond the rights and prerogatives of the government when it brings in a supply bill. May I now look at some other items which my hon. friends to the right did not include. I am not suggesting that they overlooked them; they probably felt they had enough. Let me go to item 1d under, Industry, Trade and Commerce, on page 48. This is a long item occupying half the page, but again the key words are “to authorize notwithstanding section 5 of the National Design Council Act”, a transfer of certain sums of money and authority, and so on, and I see the figures of \$9 million and \$7,500,000. All of this is apparently contrary to the provisions of section 5 of the National Design Council Act. In other words, by this \$1 item we are amending that act. How can that be justified, Mr. Speaker?

I know hon. members can go back to the record and probably find my saying this sort of thing a good many years, indeed decades, ago, but it is still wrong. This practice has continued and in fact it is getting worse. We have 52 \$1 items in this book. I am sure my hon. friends across the way will say that, with all these precedents, what am I complaining of? But it is still wrong, Mr. Speaker. I have lots of sympathy for my hon. friends across the way in regard to how we use parliamentary time, but let us solve this problem in some other way, not by this subterfuge, this practice which I think is dishonest.

May I turn now to page 76, the Department of Public Works. My hon. friends raised another item under Public Works and I want to raise item 10d which again authorizes the Minister of Public Works “notwithstanding paragraph 4(1)(a) of the Public Lands Grants Act and section 39 of the Public Works Act”, to sell, lease, and so on. We live by the rule of law, Mr. Speaker. When legislation is passed, the government is supposed to follow it. If the government wants to make changes, and it does not have time to get parliament to amend

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

legislation in the proper way, it sticks in a \$1 item and says that notwithstanding the legislation, it will be done in this way.

Let me turn to page 120 and also page 126, both under the Department of Transport. I think my hon. friend, the Minister of Transport, has a higher percentage of \$1 items than his colleagues, but not doubt he will get his reward for that. I refer particularly to item 52d on page 120 which has to do with surface transportation. It provides, “With respect to surface transportation: (a) to deem Via Rail Canada Inc., a railway company incorporated pursuant to section 11 of the Railway Act”. The largest committee room on this Hill is the railway committee room.

● (1610)

Why, Mr. Speaker? The reason is the importance of the railways for the whole country. Governments rose and fell on the railway question. Canada was brought into being as a nation from coast to coast by the railways. Having passed legislation which called on the Canadian Pacific Railway to provide certain services in perpetuity—I thought that meant forever—parliament is now to change all this by setting up a new corporation.

Perhaps it is a good idea. Surely if the setting up of the Canadian Pacific Railway was worth debating as a separate piece of legislation, the setting up of Via Rail Canada Incorporated should also be worth debating under a separate piece of legislation brought properly before the House of Commons. Most of a page is taken up with spelling out this item. I will not read it. It sets out all the privileges and authorities which are necessary. It talks about the reimbursement out of moneys to be appropriated by parliament of a railway company, uses the phrase “from time to time”, and mentions the figure of \$240 million.

We are establishing expenditures down the road and setting up a corporation to carry on down the road. All this has nothing to do with the principle of the supply bill, which is to provide, as you will say to His Excellency in the other place, funds for the operation of the public service of Canada in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1977. Similarly, on page 26, item L116d, under “Transport”, will cancel a debt associated with the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority. The item uses the following words:

—and to authorize the minister, from time to time, to fix the amount that shall be paid by the authority annually out of its toll revenue as return on capital.

Note “from time to time”. You know, years ago Mr. Bennett set up a \$2,000 car allowance for his cabinet ministers to replace the use of chauffeured limousines. He did this with \$1 item, and the members who passed it thought it was a good idea; it would save money, and it was to be temporary. Well, that “from time to time” lasted 30 years. They did something then which was allowed by a \$1 item. And here we are, providing something again “from time to time” with a \$1 item.

The only other item I shall mention is vote 30d, under External Affairs. That is a particularly interesting one. Vote 30d has to do with the Canadian International Development Agency, otherwise known as CIDA. That vote is a \$1 item and