

think greater progress will be made if we are given that information which we consider we are entitled to. I should draw the inference from the ruling made by you, Mr. Chairman, the other night, that the ministers have the right to take up on Thursdays and Fridays only, those items which have previously been considered, but that on all other days—they could take up anything.

The CHAIRMAN: If the Committee will allow me I shall draw the attention of the hon. member to the wording of the ruling which I gave on Tuesday evening. At page 1004 of Unrevised Hansard he will find that in answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Lapointe) as to whether all hon. ministers could call the items of their respective departments on the same day, I stated:

—that if the committee would consent to dispose of those Estimates with sufficient speed to allow them to do so, the ministers would have that right except on Thursday or Friday when their estimates had not previously been taken up.

The only Estimates that have heretofore been taken up are the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture, and for that reason, without the unanimous consent of this committee no Estimates of any other department can be taken up to-day.

Mr. BUREAU: And on Tuesday?

The CHAIRMAN: On Tuesday any Estimates can be taken up.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: On motion.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, after a motion that Mr. Speaker leave the Chair for the House to go into Committee of Supply, has been agreed to.

Mr. FIELDING: This matter is rather one of courtesy than a rule of the House. I think the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Bureau) has correctly stated that it is for the convenience of the House as well as a courtesy to the Opposition that at the close of the business each night we shall have an announcement of what business is coming on next day; and if the order of business as announced be changed, it should be a matter of courtesy to so advise hon. gentlemen on both sides.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: I quite agree with my hon. friend.

Mr. ROBB: Might I suggest to the right hon. gentleman leading the House that we might with considerable advantage follow the practice adopted in the British House

[Mr. Bureau.]

of Commons and on Thursday of each week have a statement from the ministry of what business will be taken up on each day of the following week.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: That would be sometimes difficult to do and would not always meet the convenience of the House. I think the rule as it has just been stated by the Chairman, coupled with the conversation we have had across the floor, will be sufficient.

Mr. BUREAU: While we are on the subject I am going to call the attention of the leader of the House to the fact that the statement made yesterday regarding the order of business for to-day is very indefinite. The Prime Minister then stated:

The order to be taken up will include the motion to go into Supply upon the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and any others that we may be entitled to consider.

I want to know if we are going to be left in that uncertain position. We should know definitely what is coming forward and then we can see what we will do.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: The Chairman has just ruled what we are entitled to do, but at the same time it is quite reasonable that whoever makes the final announcement in the evening should make it as definite as it can possibly be made. I am sure there is no other intention.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Antigonish and Guysborough): We on this side of the House do not admit that the spirit of the rule is observed. The rule might operate towards destroying the privilege which members have of discussing any department when it first comes before the House in the Estimates. In Bourinot I find on page 424 the following:

The object of the proviso is to permit of debate before first entering upon the Estimates of any department, but in practice, the consent of the House is generally given to taking up a department's Estimates without preliminary debate, under a general understanding that such debate will be entered upon at some more convenient time. The British Parliament has a somewhat similar rule.

As the ruling was made the other evening it would appear to me that the ordinary privilege members have of discussing a special department before we enter upon the Estimates of that department was taken away altogether. I think it would be well for the leader to let us know what the policy of the Government is in regard to this matter; otherwise, as my hon.