

*Dollar Items*

and they come back to the House for a pro forma vote and we have no chance of discussing these items on the floor of the House. That means that when tucked in the estimates is a \$1 item which amends a statute or brings in a new policy or agency which we ought to have the right to discuss in ordinary legislation, we not only do not have that right at all, but a form of closure is imposed upon us.

I suggest that all of the things that are said about the abuse which is involved in the use of \$1 items will still stand even if the Speaker in his ruling today says that some of the \$1 items in the current supplementary estimates have to be cut out of those estimates. However, I am not one to make the same speech day after day, and I certainly do not intend to stand here this afternoon and make the same speech that I made yesterday afternoon. I suppose I could just say to hon. members, or to readers of *Hansard*, that they should look at pages 4159 to 4163 of yesterday's *Hansard* and there they will find my speech. Having said that, I suppose I could now sit down.

**Mr. Cafik:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I welcome the applause that greeted my suggestion, but I am sorry to disappoint my hon. friend because I do not intend to sit down just yet. Every time this kind of discussion takes place it inevitably raises questions about parliament itself. I was thinking about this earlier today and thinking about some things I have heard in this place in years gone by, and I said to myself that I would use some of those recollections this afternoon but that I could use them only if the same thing is said again today. Well, I thank my hon. friend for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), and I thank my hon. friend for Eglinton: both said the sort of thing that I have been hearing in all the years that I have been in this parliament.

This leads me to what I now want to say. In the course of his remarks, the hon. member for Vegreville used words something like this, that if we continue to follow the line of the present government, the institution of parliament will no longer be able to command the respect of the country. Then the hon. member for Eglinton, who did not seem to realize that he had 30 minutes to speak or did not have enough to say to fill up his 30 minutes, fell back on what the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) said last Friday, namely, that there was a malaise, that members are bored, that this institution has lost its relevance. The hon. member for Eglinton then went on to quote what he heard John Drewery say on television the other night about parliament, that it deals in trivial things, that it is losing its importance and its relevance, and that its job is going to be taken away.

**Mr. Crouse:** You are quoting pretty weak authority.

● (1600)

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** What comes to my mind is that this sort of thing has been said for decades. In

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

fact, it has been said for centuries. I tried to find a few quotations this morning, but I did not have time to find the ones I really wanted. However, I do know there have been statements in former centuries about the British parliament, that it was a place of all talk, of people who did not know what they were talking about, and that its usefulness to the country was just about nil. There are some choice quotations in Pepys diary about having gone into the House of Commons and wondering how in the world it could possibly survive. Gladstone, in his first speech as prime minister, cast some doubt on whether parliament could continue to exist. I did find this. In the year 1942, the year I first came here, a respected person, then the minister of finance, Hon. James L. Ilsley said this:

In my judgment parliament is more and more on trial at the bar of public opinion. There is something wrong with this House of Commons. I am not reflecting on the House, and I do not know what is the cause. But there is something wrong with it.

On February 9, 1943, Mr. Brooke Claxton, who was still a private member representing the then constituency of St. Lawrence-St. George, made a speech. I remember it very well. He said he was going to do something unusual, that he was going to talk about ourselves. He quoted the complaints that are made all over the lot about how parliament is not relevant, how parliament is not doing its job. He joined in some of the complaints. He said, as reported at page 292 of *Hansard* for February 9, 1943, that too much was being done by order in council. That is not a new idea at all. Mr. Brooke Claxton, who was concerned about parliament, and who cited the things people were saying about it, came out with this paragraph that I read back to the hon. member for Eglinton and to the President of the Privy Council in response to what he said last Friday, and to John Drewery. As reported at page 291 of *Hansard* for February 9, 1943, Brooke Claxton, who sat in the back row over there and made the speech while I sat in the back row over here and heard it, said this:

I would suggest—and here I think all hon. members will agree with me—that there is no more certain way of weakening parliament than to sneer at it and its workings. We can all try to improve it, but there is no point whatever in just saying, What is the good of it?

I say to the President of the Privy Council, to the hon. member for Eglinton, to the John Drewerys and all the rest of the media who try to downgrade this place, that from Pepys of centuries gone by, to others of note, the downgrading of parliament has not worked. The British parliament is still there doing its job for the people of that land, and the Canadian parliament is still here doing a job for the people of this country.

With the exception of one member of this House, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), I have seen more of it than anyone else who is here. I have lived through its frustrations, and we on the opposition side face a good many frustrations. I have seen its ups and downs, its good