

*Interim Supply*

to note that hon. members on the government side who were critical of those estimates are now in support of them. I wondered a bit why the Minister of Finance was so anxious to call votes on this measure. He now is prepared to vote for every stage of this resolution. That makes one wonder what he meant the other day when he said that there were some of these estimates that the government was not prepared to support. It looks as though the action today supersedes that announcement and we now know that the government is in support of the estimates that are before the house.

I should like to draw the attention of the minister and of his colleague the Minister of National Health and Welfare to the fact that no answer has been given to the questions that were asked earlier today by the hon. member for Essex East and also by the hon. member for Welland, if not by other members as well. It seems to me that when we are being asked to vote a portion of the moneys asked for by the Department of National Health and Welfare we should have a statement as to what, if anything, this government is doing with regard to the program of hospital insurance.

The other day I was told by the Minister of National Health and Welfare that no agreements have yet been signed. The only information he was able to give was information we had before we left here last April, namely that six provinces had agreed to the plan. I think we should be told whether any effort has been made to get those six provinces to sign an agreement. I think we should also be told whether this government has made any effort to get the other four provinces to enter into the agreement. I feel that he should also tell us whether consideration is being given to broadening the coverage under the plan along the lines which the members of the Progressive Conservative party supported at the last session. After all, this is an extremely important matter, despite the lack of attention paid to it by the Conservatives during the election campaign and despite the absence of reference to it in the speech from the throne.

I noted with interest the one or two statements made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare to the press shortly after he became minister; but so far at this session of parliament we have had nothing but silence from the government side on this question. I think the remarks made by the hon. member for Essex East call for a reply and I hope the Minister of National Health and Welfare will seize upon this opportunity to tell us what is being done with regard to this matter.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

**Mr. Fleming:** Mr. Chairman,—

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Is it not possible for me to get a reply from the minister to whom I directed my question?

**Mr. Fleming:** Mr. Chairman, in order to set at rest the doubts that have been conjured up in the mind of my hon. friend, may I repeat what I am recorded at page 11 of *Hansard* of October 15 as having said in retabulating the existing estimates. I said this:

Since the programs provided for in these estimates were already well advanced when the new government took office, and to avoid the expenditure of a further \$20,000 for revising and reprinting them, retabulating the existing estimates is considered to be the most reasonable course of action to take under the circumstances.

The word "and" should be in there before the words "to avoid".

However, this is not to say that the present government will support all of the detailed programs contemplated when those estimates were originally prepared. Rather, such changes as this government proposes to make in the current year programs will be brought to parliament's attention when the individual items affected are being considered by the committee of supply.

Every hon. member knows that one of the important tasks that confront this session of parliament is the voting of supply for the current year. Although there is, in relation to the season of the year, a heavy legislative program otherwise, nevertheless every hon. member knows that we shall require to spend not a little time in the committee of supply reviewing all of these items. At that time there will be a full opportunity for every hon. member to indulge to the full his rights as a member in relation to the voting of final supply.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Will the minister vote for all the items then as he did today?

**Mr. Bell (Carleton):** What did you do?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I voted for them just as I did last spring.

**Mr. Fleming:** The minister will proceed in accordance with the plan indicated in the passage which I have just read from page 11 of *Hansard*.

**The Chairman:** Shall the resolution carry?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Chairman, I am still waiting as, I believe, is my friend the hon. member for Essex East for an answer from the Minister of National Health and Welfare. What is this? Is this a form of closure?

**Mr. Fleming:** No; go ahead and talk all you wish. Nobody is closing off anything. Go ahead and talk all you like.