

Interim Supply

Mr. Nowlan: And no debate will be precluded because of any discussion which might take place.

Mr. Pickersgill: No debate will be and no debate can be. But I do not mind expressing the hope that some of the debate will be abbreviated.

Mr. Nowlan: Then in view of the plaintive plea which has just been made by the Secretary of State I will make my remarks very abbreviated indeed. I cannot help but recall that it was just a little short of one year ago, I think one year less a week, when I had the responsibility of sitting in another seat and asking this committee for interim supply.

Mr. Knowles: And you gave the same assurance.

Mr. Nowlan: I gave the same assurance, but the committee did not give me the co-operation I asked for and for which the Secretary of State is asking this afternoon. In fact I recall that we were six or seven days discussing the matter before we got one month's interim supply. Actually it was seven days, I am told.

The Secretary of State's eyesight appears to be not entirely effective, because he thought this was only the 99th day of the session. He might be trying to save a day, and I can understand that. But actually it is the 100th day and this is the ninth month, and the government is again asking for one month's supply. The record—and if we had one it could be played over and over again—tells the story of inefficiency of a government coming along in the ninth month of the fiscal year and asking for interim supply. I am sure the echoes are still resounding around the top of the chamber somewhere and I could bring them down here, but I am not going to do so. We were told a year ago that we should have followed this government's example; that we did not assemble immediately after the election; that we took off 60 days or two months during the summer when we could have been sitting here, and if we had not taken that time off we would have had no problem with respect to interim supply.

Now, Mr. Chairman, you remember what happened on this occasion. There was no delay. The ink on the writs was hardly dry and the writs hardly tabled by the returning officer before parliament had reassembled in May for the first 60 days of indecision. We have had indecision ever since, and we are facing it now.

I could go on and on but I will yield to the pleas of the Secretary of State and will not make any extended remarks this afternoon.

We are in the ninth month of interim supply now. I hope, with the Secretary of State, that

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

before this interim supply expires the committee will have passed the estimates and we shall not need any further interim supply. I can say that from the heart, because I had the same wish last year. It was denied to me. I hope it will not be denied to the Secretary of State, because this time we have an opposition which is co-operating fully with the government in every way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nowlan: I appreciate that there is unanimous acceptance of that fact in all corners of the house. I can assure the hon. gentleman that as far as the opposition are concerned we shall continue to give the same degree of co-operation as we have shown so far. I hope that before Santa Claus comes climbing down the chimney we shall have passed all the estimates of the various departments.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, the members of this party are naturally influenced by the conciliatory mood of the Secretary of State, and we shall co-operate in seeing that this interim supply measure is passed as expeditiously as possible. However, there are one or two things which I think ought to be said on this occasion.

During this week the federal-provincial conference has been meeting here in Ottawa. It was hailed in some quarters as the most important federal-provincial conference since confederation. Personally I would doubt that. I think something like that is said almost every ten years about one or other of these conferences. However, there is no doubt this has been an important conference, particularly in view of some of the statements which were made before it opened. I think its deliberations and what might emanate from them could have far reaching implications for Canada.

The New Democratic party was probably the first party in Canada to devise a program called co-operative federalism which we incorporated in our founding program statement in 1961. Whether we were the first or not, we certainly did enunciate a program for co-operative federalism. I wish to say something about our views on co-operative federalism. To me it means working together to make our federal system work, not for one province or for one region but for all Canadians. It does not mean looking upon Canada as a loose federation of autonomous provinces held together by a central government bereft of legislative or fiscal confidence. I do not think the people of this country look upon themselves primarily as Quebecers, Nova Scotians, British Columbians and so on. They look upon themselves first and foremost as