

proposed by His Excellency for the purpose of spending certain moneys, but that is not so. There are also some legislative changes.

• (2:40 p.m.)

If Your Honour will refer to *Hansard* for March 3, 1969, you will see what was said on that occasion by members of the opposition and by the President of the Treasury Board. His justification was merely that it was more expeditious to do it this way. More expeditious for the government!

Let us look at these interim financing arrangements with the provinces. Is it done this way because the government does not want a debate? It could happen that its majority in the Miscellaneous Estimates Committee would not even ask a blessed question about it, not one; nobody must rock the boat by asking questions about government practices and policy.

So this is the method chosen—a tame committee with a tame committee report. Then it might be up to the House to take out of that report the portions dealing with the question of amendments to veterans legislation and the interim arrangements with the provinces regarding these programs and make them a subject for discussion. There is absolutely no way in which the legislation itself can be considered as such. The President of the Privy Council says "Nonsense". I repeat there is no way in which the legislation can be considered as legislation and, of course, I know he is such a good legal draftsman that he would, out of a vote in the estimates, determine how revised statutes should be written. Statutes are passed and they are the source of what goes into the revision of statutes. It is not estimates.

I trust that you, Mr. Speaker, will also take to heart the representations which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and I have made with regard to the nature of these estimates, their presentation and their acceptability. Are they in essence what they appear to be? I put it to Your Honour that they are not what they appear to be—they are not part of spending programs, they are requests for the changing of legislation. Surely an item of one dollar does not really represent a change in a spending program.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of Treasury Board): At least two points have been made in the current discussion, Mr. Speaker. One is that we have changed our rules and that in consequence we should look at past practices in a new light. The other is that past practices, even under the old rules, were perhaps incorrect.

With respect to this process of securing authority to act in a certain way by means of an Appropriation Act rather than through specific bills, I would point out that it has been the practice for a long while to use estimates and supplementary estimates leading to Appropriation Acts as a means of effecting changes in legislative enactments, and it has been well recognized, I believe, that this is an appropriate and satisfactory way in which to

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proceed. In the past it has not denied to members of the House an opportunity to examine, to cross-examine, to criticize and, where appropriate, to see that changes are effected. This has led to the practice of introducing dollar items in supplementary estimates over a long period.

Mr. Baldwin: Bank robbery is bad.

Mr. Drury: For some time it has been agreed that these dollar items should be limited to using the Appropriation Acts to amend other legislative enactments in the following cases:

1. To alter financial limitations imposed by legislation or by previous estimates. As an example, I might quote an increase in the maximum amount which may be loaned by CMHC for housing purposes.

2. To alter time limitations imposed by legislation or by previous estimates. An example of this was the change in the termination date of the trans-Canada highway program.

3. To extend the application of legislation to persons not covered by the legislation so as to authorize the making of payments to such persons in accordance with the substance and purposes of the legislation—for example, authority to make payments under the Government Employees Compensation Act to former employees of Dosco suffering from silicosis.

4. To amend legislation originally approved through items in the estimates or the Appropriation Acts. For example, broadening the scope of a revolving fund, itself established by an Appropriation Act.

5. To effect transfers of available funds to votes where additional funds are required.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre indicated that these descriptions of appropriate dollar items have in the past been satisfactory and, if I gather this meaning correctly, that this is still the case under the present rules. What we are concerned about is the marginal case which may fall outside the particular headings I have just given. We should perhaps consider the question whether there is adequate opportunity for members of the House to scrutinize the legislative changes which are being proposed, not by way of four separate bills, each having to make its own progress through the House, but by way of a single legislative enactment, namely, an Appropriation Act.

In the case of these amendments, we are not amending anything except schedules or termination dates of other statutes. We are amending the termination dates or rates of emolument contained in schedules. I suggest this clearly falls within the definitions I have given earlier of items which may properly be the subject of changes in legislation by means of an amendment to an Appropriation Act.

In this particular case, the change in program was announced by the Minister of Veterans Affairs in and to the House on December 2 last in a statement on motions. Not only did this draw attention to the government's intention but it provided an opportunity for brief com-