

*Business of Supply*

one year priorities in a number of areas change. Things are changing very rapidly and we must be able to accommodate ourselves to change. The alternative would have been to seek supplementary estimates for the amount of the additional items and, to say nothing of those where slow-downs were being imposed, to find compensatory funds. I suggest that this would have been less informative to the house and to the public.

The \$1 items authorizing such changes are in fact a demonstration of a real policy of restraint in relation to government expenditures rather than the reverse. Further, I suggest they provide more information to members, which should be the source of greater knowledge and consequently greater authority.

In respect of the \$1 items which do not represent a transfer of funds from one account to another, I think the house would probably have to look at the individual items, as the committee did, to reach a conclusion whether these items represented substantial and meaningful legislation or some relatively minor change in the statute referred to.

The hon. member for Edmonton West made reference to Vote 12b of the Department of Labour as being a means for amending legislation relating to employees' compensation. The present legislation contemplates a certain framework of conditions under which compensation would be paid by the government in respect of its employees for disabilities incurred as a consequence of such employment. It is quite a comprehensive and long act which is accompanied by a schedule indicating those classes of employees to whom this legislation applies. In this particular case we do not want to change the philosophy nor do we want to change the legislation substantially. However, we do want to include under its provisions a group of men who appear, as a consequence of a recent corporate transaction, to have been left out in the cold.

As the hon. member for Edmonton West suggested, this is the kind of thing the government should do. We have done it, and the only question to be asked then is: How do we get this legislation amended to take care of this special circumstance? One way is to introduce a one or two-line bill amending the Government Employees Compensation Act and put it through all the deliberate and deliberative procedure of first and second reading, reference to committee, and report and third reading, or to provide the same kind of consideration in the house and in committee followed again by consideration in

the full house under a supplementary appropriation act. As this is more a question of money than of the underlying philosophy of the act that is being changed, this would appear to be the more appropriate mechanism. Again, where various acts impose fiscal or chronological limitations, where a change is designed for specific purposes but without changing the underlying purpose and philosophy of the act, this seems a more convenient way of doing it and a more effective one having in mind the time of the members of the house.

● (4:20 p.m.)

As the hon. member for Edmonton West pointed out, there are already tremendous pressures on members' time. There is a tremendous amount to be done and most of us feel we cannot find the time in which to do it. If a method can be found which consumes less time while still providing adequate opportunity for consideration by those who are interested, then I favour it. I suggest it is in this spirit that \$1 items, having the effect of legislating rather than merely transferring funds from one account to another, appear in these estimates. The purpose is not to deprive parliament of its control over the executive. The purpose, rather, is to allow parliament more time to deal with the larger issues. In other words, the time of parliament is not consumed in dealing with a series of relatively minor measures which nevertheless engage the whole majestic apparatus of this institution.

I do not believe there is much more I can add. The hon. member for Edmonton West referred to a news story quoting me as saying parliament was losing control over government spending. If there was such a story—and I do not doubt the hon. gentleman's word—I say it did not come from me. I myself think our new system of preparing and presenting estimates will increase, not decrease, the effectiveness of parliamentary control over spending.

Our present system is not good and it should be revised. With this, I agree. I believe parliament should have more effective control, not more control in detail but more effective control, over spending, and in my opinion the system to which we are moving will accomplish this. But I do not agree with the hon. member for Edmonton West that providing more roadblocks, more delays, more obstruction, without increasing our knowledge, will have the effect of improving parliamentary control. I suppose the ability to