

Interim Supply

primarily, discussing in this debate and that is why this debate on interim supply has gone on for nine days. The ultimate refusal to grant interim supply could be an end of the government. It is possible to bring a government down by a continual and persistent refusal to grant supply. That is the responsibility of those who take the course on the other side of preventing the government meeting its bills. That is the responsibility of those who keep the interim supply debate going to the point where it is not possible for the government to meet its bills. That point has not been reached and therefore I do not feel unduly alarmed about the debate that has been taking place. Nor will we, Mr. Chairman, allow the threat of that ultimate result to turn us away from the course of action and the policy which we believe to be right in this matter. We believe that our course and our policy in this matter are right, and I hope we will have an opportunity before long to explain and defend that policy on the second reading of the bill. We believe, Mr. Speaker, also that interim supply, after nine days, should now be granted so that we can get on with the program before this House of Commons. If that can be done, and I hope it will be done by ten o'clock tonight—

• (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. Winkler: May I ask a question?

Mr. Pearson: —it is our intention to proceed with the National Housing Act amendments. There will then be a chance to debate medicare and I hope pass that bill. After medicare we also hope to introduce the legislation to provide supplementary benefits to old age pensioners. There is also, of course, the National Defence Act itself.

Mr. Winkler: When will we have the old age security resolution?

Mr. Pearson: None of these things, however, can be done while we continue to debate interim supply.

Mr. Starr: Then why do you not end it?

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friend would like us to end it by abdicating our responsibility as a government and we do not propose to do that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: Then, Mr. Chairman, there is one more supply motion and there are estimates to be disposed of. All these are important priority measures. If interim supply is

granted, we propose to proceed with them and continue in session here until they are disposed of.

Mr. Monteith: Is that a threat?

Mr. Pearson: There is one point I should like to mention in finishing. There is the question of the effect of the prolongation of this discussion on the holding up of salaries of civil servants. Since the opposition has not seen fit to provide interim supply for one month as requested by the government—and during the last nine days it became clear this was going to be a problem, the nature and extent of which I was not quite sure about myself—I instructed that all money votes be examined in order to determine whether or not it would be possible for the government to meet its present commitments. The commitments in this regard do not cover the estimates which have been passed, and I think that includes about 50 per cent of the commitments. That examination has been made by my colleague the President of the Treasury Board.

The President of the Treasury Board has informed me that after extensive work by his department, which he will be able to explain in detail if required, it is now possible for us to meet the mid-month civil service pay and urgent contractual obligations.

Mr. Starr: You could have done it the first of the week.

An hon. Member: You could have done it today.

Mr. Starr: What poor administrators, to hold up the civil service pay.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, in a kindly way—

Mr. Fulton: The truth will out.

Mr. Pearson: —I suggest to my friends in the opposition that they now stop building up this atmosphere of crisis which may be so helpful next week and that they go to the convention happy and smiling as good Conservatives should. I say this with a real understanding of the strength and sincerity of the feeling held by those on the other side. I appeal to my friends in the opposition that we pass interim supply tonight, that we go ahead with our housing, medicare, pensions and defence legislation, that we go on with the business of government next week. The time will then come when the National Defence