

Interim Supply

The first paragraph of schedule A states in part:

Based on the main estimates, 1966-67. The amount hereby granted is—

Then it lists amounts to the extent of four-twelfths, three-twelfths and so on. This means that the estimates of nine or ten departments have been passed and that employees of these departments were paid today. Employees of other departments were not paid. Let me ask two questions, because this situation will cause some concern among civil servants, those who were paid and those who were not.

I should like to ask the appropriate minister to give an explanation for this legislation which seems to be a departure from our usual practice in passing Appropriation Acts. Can the minister explain the reason behind these two bills, one which provides for all the estimates of certain departments to the end of this fiscal year, March 31, 1967, and the other which provides for three-twelfths, four-twelfths and so on of various other departments? I ask because this seems to be an unusual procedure and because it will cause certain concern and perhaps friction among civil servants, those who have been paid and the others who have to await the will of parliament.

Mr. McIlraith: The explanation for this departure in procedure in July is very simple. It has been found in recent years that it has taken long periods of time to consider the estimates in committee. It had always been our practice to pass an appropriation bill only when all the estimates had been considered and examined in detail by the committee of the whole house. The eight or ten departmental estimates which were examined in detail by the standing committee, under the new procedure this year, and by the committee of the whole house were finally confirmed in an appropriation bill without waiting until all the other departmental estimates had been considered.

The usual practice of taking one or two months interim supply, as the case may be, applicable to the other departmental estimates was followed.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, I think I will deal kindly with the Minister of National Defence but I would reserve the right to do otherwise. The word at the back of the curtain, and we might as well have it out in the open, is that the attempts of the house leaders to come to some agreement to solve the impasse with which we are faced have failed. In

short, the collision course continues. At the opening of the sitting this afternoon the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam offered what I thought was a good suggestion, that the party leaders, not the house leaders, get together to resolve the situation in which we find ourselves. This would mean the right hon. Prime Minister, the right hon. gentleman who was the former prime minister, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, the hon. member for Villeneuve, and the hon. member for Red Deer.

• (9:00 p.m.)

I think a large part of the responsibility for solving the affairs of this house naturally rests on the leadership which should be given by the Prime Minister of this country. I do not intend to allow him to abdicate his responsibilities by his failure to show up here on a day that has become a day of crisis. The hon. member on the other side who is now moving out of the chamber was elected as long ago as 1940 and there are members on this side who have been here a long time who will recall the days when the Prime Minister of this country was Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King. The name of Mr. King is not particularly revered in the party to which I belong but the fact is that Mr. King never got himself in really great difficulties in parliament. One of the reasons for that was that he did his house work in the House of Commons.

He was present here when the chips were down and when important issues were at stake. He did his best by speaking to this and that backbencher, by understanding the mood of the house and living with it. I think he did remarkably well. The present Prime Minister graces us with his presence during the question period and then disappears. Most of the time he does not come back again. I will not forget his failure to be in the house this evening and I will not allow the record of this parliament to let this fact go unnoted. He is abdicating his responsibility.

An hon. Member: What about your leader?

Another hon. Member: Which one?

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, I will speak in a moment on the burning issue of the moment but now I wish to turn to some thoughtful remarks which were made here the other day regarding the committee system. I think something should be put on the record about our committee system. If members tallied up the work week most of them would find that they spend 13 hours a day, either in