

I cannot remember whether there was ever an added statement, “— and the granting of interim supply in no way prejudices the work of Parliament or its committees with regard to the Main Estimates”, or whether that is simply something that is in *Beauchesne*'s. I think that is the context in which we are being asked for interim supply.

**Senator Olson:** I hope it is the practice.

**Senator Frith:** I am sure it is the context in which interim supply is asked for and that the intent is that it is without prejudice to the consideration of the Main Estimates, and that a government will never go to Parliament or the committee and say, “Look, you gave us three-twelfths of this; you cannot criticize the rest.” I think that is the situation, if that is of any help.

• (1520)

**Senator Olson:** Do we have a commitment from the house leader that he will not object?

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** The tradition is that interim supply is voted and the committee continues to study the Main Estimates. Perhaps Senator Stewart can confirm that procedure.

**Hon. John B. Stewart:** I do not know what the problem is.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** There was no problem a moment ago.

**Senator Stewart:** The Main Estimates have been sent to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. The government is asking for three-twelfths in some cases, seven-twelfths in other cases, and nine-twelfths in this interim supply bill.

As Senator Olson said, the old fiscal year has not yet ended. Normally the government will need money in the new fiscal year, perhaps April 12, 13 or 14. There is no urgency.

There will be questions in the committee. For example, I want to know why the government wants nine-twelfths of the Treasury Board Vote No. 5 now, the contingency vote. They are asking for \$337.5 million. That is money which can be spent for virtually any purpose. They are not asking for three-twelfths. They are asking for nine-twelfths of the total, which is \$450 million. That is the standard total. I want to know why they want nine-twelfths of that now.

**An Hon. Senator:** For the election.

**Senator Stewart:** Yes, that is not perhaps unduly cynical.

We have these questions, and they can be dealt with in the committee on the Main Estimates. There is no reason why the bill cannot be dealt with by due process well before the government needs the money, unless there is an extraordinary requirement that has not yet been revealed.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** There is nothing mysterious about the bill. I thought we were following years of tradition of bringing in an interim supply bill and referring the Main Estimates to the committee. Meanwhile, for three months, moneys were being voted in various portions.

Of course, the Senate can decide if it wants to delay and have hearings, but the money will be needed by a certain date. If Senator Olson can only have his committee meet on March 29th and the fiscal year starts three days later, I do not think we will be any further ahead.

**Senator Stewart:** You do not need the money on April 1.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** We do not expect to be here after April 6. We intend to adjourn until well after Easter, but if the committee wants to meet during that time —

**Senator Stewart:** That is a matter for you and senators to decide, but surely we will not set aside the ordinary financial procedures of this house simply so that we can adjourn at a date convenient to some of us.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** I have been following the ordinary procedures.

**Senator Stewart:** The ordinary procedure, if I recall correctly, is that we get the Main Estimates, and we ask, when we get the interim supply, that we at least have a chance to ask questions of people who can give detailed responses. The responses are ordinarily very good.

Why, for example, do you want nine-twelfths of the contingency vote right now?

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** Are these not questions asked ordinarily in the committee when the Estimates are being debated? Meanwhile, the bill itself is passed. Is that not the practice?

**Senator Stewart:** No.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** When we come to the interim supply for the current fiscal year, will we have the same kind of answer?

**Senator Stewart:** That is what we are on.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** No, we are not. We are on next year; we are not on this year. We are on the new fiscal year. We have two supply bills before us.

**Senator Olson:** Bill C-120.

**Senator Lynch-Staunton:** And Bill C-119. We are dealing with Bill C-120. Do we follow the same procedure for Bill C-119?

**Senator Stewart:** Perhaps I am wrong. I understood we were on the interim supply for the forthcoming fiscal year.

**Senator Molgat:** That is right.