

Alleged Irregularity in Defence Estimates

This vote was for the fiscal year which will end at the end of this month. Now the vote which is requested in this year's book, 1968, as recorded on page 308 under the same heading, "defence services" and the same vote No. 15, reads as follows:

Operation and maintenance and construction or acquisition of buildings, works, land and major equipment and development for the Canadian forces and \$1,850,000 for grants to the town of Oromocto.

Mr. Speaker, with the single exception of the amount of money involved in grants to the town of Oromocto and a subsequent bracketed admonition, "details page 316", the two votes are absolutely identical. The only difference—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Would the minister say where the Royal Canadian Navy is?

Mr. Hellyer: The only difference is in respect of the details. This, I think, is not only logical but essential. The details for the fiscal year commencing April 1 next are based on the integrated forces as they are presently administered. It is not possible to segregate by services all the costs involved in operating the services in the year ahead, notwithstanding the fact that they are still three legal entities, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

If I may, I should like to give some examples of that in respect of maritime command. As hon. gentlemen are aware, Mr. Speaker, maritime command consists of elements of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Mr. Lambert: It always did.

Mr. Hellyer: The information which is really pertinent to parliament in making up its collective mind in respect of the expenditures for the year ahead is information concerning expenditures related to that particular function of maritime command.

Mr. Lambert: It was split last year.

Mr. Hellyer: The situation is similar in so far as other commands are concerned, Mr. Speaker. For example, the way training command has been organized during the course of last year it would be physically impossible, without entailing administrative costs which would be ridiculously high and cumbersome and certainly not in the public interest, to maintain records on a single service basis because training command is organized to

[Mr. Hellyer.]

provide basic training, individual training, including flight training to wing standard for the men and women of the three armed forces, the navy, army and air force.

In so far as materiel command is concerned, precisely the same problem arises. Although materiel command still has under its jurisdiction the three separate supply systems, during the interval and until a single supply system can be developed which will eliminate some duplication or triplication, which will permit the consolidation of bases and which will permit considerable savings and at the same time the implementation of a more effective logistic system for our armed forces, it is impossible to segregate in materiel command the costs which are attributable to the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

● (3:00 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, I will only be a moment or two.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to be fair to the minister because other hon. members who have taken part in this debate on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West were given considerable latitude, and certainly the minister is entitled to the same consideration. However, from listening to hon. members, and particularly to the arguments advanced by the minister and by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, I have the impression that this line of reasoning is of the kind which would be advanced more reasonably if the Chair recognized that there was a question of privilege and a motion were submitted to the house.

It seems to me that would be the time when arguments in support of or in opposition to a proposed motion should be advanced by hon. members. The very limited point of concern to the Chair at the moment is whether there is a question of privilege. No doubt many of the points advanced by hon. members might be quite relevant if this matter were before the house, whether by way of consideration of the estimate itself or the estimates in general or by substantive motion. But the one point the Chair has to consider now and on which I will reflect later on is whether there is a question of privilege here.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, that was really the point to which I was addressing myself,