

*Main Estimates*

[English]

**Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel):** I wonder, Madam Speaker, if I may be permitted to put certain questions to the minister, based partly on the estimates he has tabled and partly on the statement he has read into the record as prepared for him. Could the minister, first of all, indicate whether he accepts the main estimates as tabled? Does he support them and does he recommend them to the House for adoption?

**Mr. Johnston:** As I indicated in the course of my statement, Madam Speaker, these estimates represent the policy proposals of the previous administration. They are being tabled legally as our estimates but, as I indicated, we will be bringing forward supplementary estimates to give effect to those changes and to the policies which have been mentioned in the throne speech debate and which will be further elaborated during the course of the current year.

**Mr. Stevens:** Perhaps I was not completely clear in my question to the minister. My question is very simple. Does he recommend to the House the main estimates for 1980-81 as tabled in the House?

**Mr. Johnston:** These main estimates will be referred to committee and they are recommended for adoption, subject to such changes as might be brought down in the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Stevens:** I think it should be noted for the record that twice the minister has refrained from recommending these estimates to the House. Unless the minister chooses to clarify the situation, we will be on the threshold of going into another question of privilege and a debate on how we can consider these main estimates if the minister who has brought them in is hesitant to recommend them to the House. It is a very simple question.

We had this out last fall. The present Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), who was then opposition House leader, became terribly exercised last fall over this question, I would have thought they would have at least got their act sorted out to the point where the Minister of Finance would be in tandem with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) and both of them would be willing to recommend these estimates to the House for acceptance.

**Mr. Johnston:** I thought my answer was quite clear. I said that these main estimates were being tabled and they will be referred to the committee. They are being recommended for adoption subject to such modifications as may subsequently be made thereto through tabling supplementary estimates to give effect to policy changes which this administration may wish to introduce.

● (1620)

**Mr. Stevens:** Madam Speaker, in the context of what the minister has said, and with the main estimates showing a total expenditure for fiscal 1980-81 of \$58.4 billion, would the President of the Treasury Board reconcile that figure with the

statement given to us last night by the Minister of Finance which indicated that the total outlays for 1980-81 would be \$60.4 billion, in short a \$2 billion difference? What has happened overnight that somehow or other the \$60.4 billion figure, which we were asked to consider last night, is now only being substantiated to the extent of \$58.4 billion? Does he have any statement which he can put before the House to reconcile these two figures?

**Mr. Knowles:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is it not a rule, when a statement has been made by a minister, that a spokesman for each opposition party may make a statement in response thereto and that the question period comes afterwards? I am not trying to cut off the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) from asking his questions. I just think that he should make his statement now, let our spokesman make his statement, and then have the question period as the standing order provides.

**Madam Speaker:** I gathered that the hon. member had no statement but only questions. I am in the hands of the House as to what I should do now. I feel that I should continue to recognize the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) for the purpose of him putting his questions.

**Mr. Stevens:** Madam Speaker, I do not want to be overly technical, but if Your Honour reads Standing Order 15(3), I think it is very clear that the options are open to the members of the House. It reads as follows:

A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon and members may be permitted to address questions thereon to the minister.

I do not think it is laid out in the standing order that one has formally to make a statement and then everybody, when they are through with their statements, may start questioning. I think it is open to each member to decide. If he wishes to make a statement, he can. If he wishes to ask questions, he can. In my case I think it is very important that certain very relevant information be revealed to this House, as opposed to any member feeling that he just wants to wax eloquent about whatever may come into his mind.

We were not given a full disclosure last evening. We have had a debate on the question of privilege as to whether in fact the minister's statement was a smuggled budget. Today I would suggest that we are not having a full disclosure as to the expenditure plans of this government. I feel that I am entirely in order in asking the President of the Treasury Board at least to shed a little more light on this question.

**Mr. Knowles:** Madam Speaker, I have no objection to the hon. member for York-Peel asking all the questions that he wants to. Neither do I insist that he make a statement. But it seems to me that those who wish to make statements should be heard first. If the hon. member for York-Peel does not wish to make a statement, then I believe that our spokesman should be permitted to make his statement and that the questions should follow.