

Previous speakers in this discussion, in referring to the nature of a supply bill, have pointed out it is a bill for one year. I have in my hand a copy of Bill C-28, a supplementary estimates bill which we passed earlier in this session. So I know the bill which will be before us tomorrow will contain exactly the same preamble, that is, it will be an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the year ending March 31, 1977. Then there are some more words in which the Governor General says he has sent a message that "the said sums hereinbefore mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Canada not otherwise provided for in the financial year ending the 31st day of March, 1977." That date appears time and time again. Sir, when you lead us over to the other place when this bill has finally been passed, and when you have the opportunity to present it to the Governor General or to his deputy, you will say:

May it please Your Honour, I have the honour to present a bill being sums required for the public service of Canada for the year ending March 31, 1977.

But lo and behold, we find in these supplementary estimates a number of matters in respect of which provision does not end on March 31, 1977. Continuous financing will be required, in some cases for a few years, and in others in perpetuity. For example, once we set up this Via Rail Canada it will cost money down the road as long as we can foresee, at least until we find some other way of dealing with our transportation needs.

Like other members of the House, I have done some study of \$1 estimates over the years in which I have been here, and I recall having some correspondence with Mr. Watson Seller when he was auditor general, years ago. He had gone into the subject and he quoted from papers which had been prepared a generation earlier with regard to it. All those who have studied it have said that \$1 items inserted in the estimates for convenience are legitimate, but that if they are used as a vehicle to evade the bringing in of legislation they become highly questionable. As I say, the act itself applies only for one year and then the authority it contains lapses. How, then, have we the right to include in the bill items which provide for expenditure down the road? The legal answer is, of course, to say that all we are passing is an estimate for \$1. Well, take that Energy, Mines and Resources estimate 62D, on page 22, or take the Industry, Trade and Commerce item 72D, which is on page 52 of the book—perhaps I will take it rather than the other, because the sum is larger. There we are providing for an increase from \$750 million to \$2,500 million and then an increase from \$750 million to \$1 billion—despite the amount set out in the act, incidentally.

● (1600)

We will provide, as I say, for the expenditure of many dollars in future fiscal years, but the bill provides, of course, only for moneys to be spent in this fiscal year. All that is to be spent in this fiscal year is \$1, though I do not think anyone even gets that; it is just symbolic. However, by the process of having parliament approve \$1 in the fiscal year for which we

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are voting money we give the government the right to spend money next year, the year after and years down the road.

All of those who have wrestled with this problem over the years—and they have been wrestling with it certainly throughout this century—are right in their view that \$1 items are all right for convenience, particularly when they specifically relate to the spending of money, but they are questionable—I would even say illegal—when they provide for the enactment of continuing legislation.

Let me take a moment to look up some of the precise items, despite the chiding we were given on this point by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council. I think there are questions about all the items which were raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton and added to by one or two others. I should like to speak about three of them and then I want to speak about three or four items which they did not mention.

Let us look at page 22, the item L62d under "Energy, Mines and Resources". It gives Eldorado Nuclear Limited, "with the approval of the governor in council, power to borrow money for capital expenditures by the issue and sale of securities up to an aggregate amount not exceeding \$40 million, bearing such rates of interest and subject to such other terms and conditions as the governor in council may approve". Either that is going to cost us money down the road and we will have approved it by voting \$1, or it is a piece of legislation telling a private corporation what it can do. If it is a piece of legislation telling a private corporation what it can do, it should be before this House as legislation and subject to all the debating and procedural considerations attaching to legislation. I think my friend for Grenville-Carleton is perfectly right to raise that; I think it was his first concern as a case which is serious indeed.

Let me now turn to page 52, to the item I have already mentioned, namely, vote 77d under the Export Development Corporation. I have already used the figures in this vote, but what to me is more important than the figures, even if the money amounted to only a few dollars, are the words "to increase from", so and so, "the amount set out in section 26 of the Export Development Act". Then in (b) there is another set of figures, and the words "the amount set out in section 28 of the Export Development Act". This is legislation, Mr. Speaker; this is not voting of estimates. This is not just a case of voting \$1. The item is a subterfuge. It is pretty close to being dishonest.

We are amending the Export Development Act and doing it under the closure which applies to a supply bill. We are departing from the whole purpose of supply legislation and are going beyond the right of Treasury Board to deal with estimates. Certainly, we are passing something which is beyond the requirements of a supply bill which Your Honour will present to His Excellency in the other place for the specific year ending March 31, 1977.

I turn to another item mentioned by my hon. friends to the right which appears on page 72, item 1d under the Post Office Department. To me, the offensive words in this item are "notwithstanding the Olympic (1976) Act". If this is legal,