

Interim Supply

we had the first two days of this week which affords hon. members an opportunity of airing grievances in the house. But this is not that proceeding. We are now in committee of supply. We are here not on a specific item but on a resolution contemplating a vote of interim supply, a fraction of all the items in the estimates.

It is because of this situation that it has been customary over the years for the Minister of Finance to give the committee the assurance I gave this afternoon. All hon. members are well aware that the provision of interim supply will not abridge the right of any hon. member to raise any question on any item that is properly relevant to that item when it is reached in due course in the annual review of the estimates in the committee of supply.

With respect, it seems to me this is not a proper use to make of the present proceeding. This certainly has not been customary in the past. These motions over the years with few exceptions have gone through in a matter of just a few minutes, sometimes with hardly a mention.

I raise the point because if it is in order for an hon. member to embark on a speech on unemployment it is equally open to him or to any other hon. member, I suppose, to embark on a speech on any subject at this time and that would mean just a duplication of the debate that the rules provide for being held under proper circumstances when the items are called seriatim in due course. There is little point in a minister when introducing such a resolution giving such an undertaking to the committee if some hon. members are simply going to go ahead and debate items. I suggest that the hon. member is proceeding as though this were a motion to resolve the house into committee of supply. It is clearly not that kind of proceeding. I do urge, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. member confine himself to matters that are relevant to the resolution, and that are within the practice of this house on such proceedings, that is where we are in committee of supply on the resolution to provide interim supply.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few observations on the point of order raised by the minister. I would draw Your Honour's attention first of all to the fact that on March 29, 1957, I believe the last time Mr. Harris asked for interim supply, the present Minister of Finance spoke long enough to cover six pages of *Hansard*, which I think perhaps is the most eloquent possible reply to the argument the minister has just made. On that same day, Mr. Knight spoke; Mr. Knowles spoke; Mr. Stewart spoke;

Mr. Hees spoke; Mr. Hamilton, the present Postmaster General, spoke; and the present Prime Minister also spoke. There is no record of any exception having been taken by Mr. Harris who was the leader of the house and minister of finance and who, perhaps, knew a great deal more about the rules than any person sitting in this house at the present time.

Moreover, I should also draw your attention, sir, to the fact that on June 11 and June 22, 1956, there were also debates on interim supply. There was a considerable debate that took place on June 22 on a subject very closely related to the subject which was then before the house. I am sure the minister will have some recollection of a debate on pipe lines.

What is really all but outrageous in the minister's point of order is this: Here is the Minister of Finance, Her Majesty's minister, coming here and asking for supply. As you know, sir, the most ancient of the rights of the commons is the right to grant or to refuse supply. Here is the minister, a suppliant, telling those of us who may or may not grant his request that we have no right to talk about it.

The Chairman: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that he is not speaking to the point of order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

The Chairman: I sincerely believe he is not. Because the minister has raised that point, it does not change the rules of the house and I would, therefore, ask the hon. member to stick to the point of order.

Mr. Pickersgill: I shall do my utmost, but I was pointing out that what is before the house is a request for interim supply, and that nothing will be found in the rules to curtail the rights of hon. members to speak on such a motion, any more than is the case on any other request for supply.

I admit, sir, that it has been customary, when there was a particular grievance that could otherwise be conveniently aired, not to speak on this motion. I do not think anyone would argue that. Ordinarily, common sense would indicate this was a desirable practice, habitually. I would go that far with the minister. I want to be reasonable. But this is a very exceptional situation. We had information brought into the house yesterday, information which cannot be debated on the very next item that is to be called, supplementary estimates, so the only convenient opportunity that anyone can see for this debate is at the present time, regardless of what the subject might be so long as it is within the administrative competence of the