

I was interested in reading report No. 2 of the Miscellaneous Estimates Committee when it was studying the supplementary estimates, in particular this \$800 million advance figure. This happened after both the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) had told us that the ceiling was not realistic, should not be in the legislation, and that there was no reason for it. When the estimates were discussed before the Miscellaneous Estimates Committee, Mr. Nielsen was questioning the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) on the \$800 million ceiling on advances. After remarking that advances had been made under special warrants over and above the \$800 million ceiling, Mr. Nielsen remarked—

• (1640)

An hon. Member: Order!

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): —as follows:

There seems little purpose in having a ceiling at all in the act . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member who has just made a remark is not the only one who wishes to make the point that I am about to bring to the attention of the House. It is considered against parliamentary practice to refer to other hon. members by name. They should be referred to by constituency or, if they happen to be in the ministry or occupy some other position, they should be referred to as occupying that position in the ministry or elsewhere. They should not be referred to by name. I regret to make this point during the hon. member's speech, as he has not in any way used that ill practice with malice or intent. However, I must bring this to the attention of the House and ask for consideration of proprieties.

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your admonition. May I point out that I was quoting directly from Issue No. 2 of the Miscellaneous Estimates Committee proceedings, dated January 16. As Your Honour is aware, people asking questions in the committee are referred to by name and not by constituency. I thought what I was doing was permissible as I was quoting directly from the report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is correct in referring to excerpts from reports of committee proceedings in that way. I did not understand at first that he was reading a question asked by an hon. member, or a comment made by an hon. member. However, there have been occasions when hon. members, including the hon. member who has just spoken, have referred to other hon. members by name rather than by their constituencies and at that time they were not dealing with quotations from committee proceedings. That practice is wrong and the Chair asks the co-operation of the House in avoiding it.

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I will try to make clear when I am reading from the report. I am about to quote from Issue No. 2 of Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, dated January 16, 1973. In that particular committee the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) was questioning the President of the Treasury Board and the following exchange is recorded on page 2:25:

Unemployment Insurance Act

MR. NIELSEN: There seems little purpose in having a ceiling at all in the act under those conditions.

MR. DRURY: No, Mr. Chairman, I suggest there is a very good purpose in having a ceiling. This particular ceiling, I suggest, was put in in order that Parliament would have an opportunity to examine the reasons for the circumstances surrounding any sums in excess of this, which is precisely what we are engaged in now.

After all our efforts to obtain some explanation from the responsible minister or his substitute as to the reason for the ceiling, those who served on the committee and who knew there had to be some reason for the ceiling learned, by inference, that it was included for the purpose of enabling parliament to exercise control. The President of the Treasury Board admitted as much when he said, as we had suggested all along, that the ceiling was put in the act in order to give parliament some control over the actions of the government.

On the next page we find the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) reported as saying that, in the circumstances, the ceiling was not necessary and was useless. The following exchange is recorded:

MR. DRURY: Let me put it another way, Mr. Chairman. I do not want to make a great thing of this. Parliament would have an opportunity . . .

MR. NIELSEN: Ex post facto.

MR. DRURY: . . . of inquiring into the operation of the fund if the amount of the advances exceeded \$800 million. If the ceiling had been set at a hypothetical figure, \$5 billion,—

Let me add paranthetically that the government is no longer asking for \$5 billion. The sky is the limit now. I continue:

—there would have been no occasion for the issue of Governor General's warrants. There would have been no occasion for a parliamentary examination of the operations of the fund or the commission. By placing this limitation, the executive is required to come before Parliament to explain how and why it happened and what changes should be made.

Is that not what members of my party have been saying ever since second reading?

An hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I will entertain questions, if I have time, at the conclusion of my speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. Does the hon. member agree to accept a question?

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): If I have time at the conclusion of my speech I will be glad to entertain questions, otherwise I am afraid I may not finish.

As I was saying, do the minister's words not confirm exactly the position that we, in the opposition, have been taking? The reason for the ceiling is obvious. It was included, as the President of the Treasury Board said, to permit parliament to exercise control over the actions of the government with respect to the operation of this account.

The minister now responsible for the act authorized, I assume, a news release dated January 17, 1973 which attempts to explain the purpose of Bill C-124. At the top of the new release one sees, "Unemployment Insurance,