

Procedure on Estimates

has to be a restoration or re-instatement is where in committee there have been changes made and the government must then come back to the House. This I will repeat and perhaps the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) will understand it. This is not a government day; this is an opposition day. It is the opposition which has the control of the debate. I say with all due deference, Mr. Speaker, that here I will cease my pleas on this matter. The purpose of this exercise is the consideration of items that have been posted by the opposition and the subsequent procedure in respect of bills is an entirely different question. At the present time, however, we are considering the items put forward by the opposition and, under the rules, it is said that opposition be posted and notices, given. That is the purport of the debate today.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, who said procedure is stale? We certainly have a new point of order and a new situation to consider at the present time. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, before the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) rose it had been my intention to raise a point of order. However, my purpose was not so much to complain about any motions that might have been put down or even to offer a solution, but rather to ask Your Honour to clarify the situation so that we might know what we are doing today if we proceed with the motion that is on the order paper in the name of the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). It seems to me one thing is being made very clear by what is happening today. That is, for all of the credit that may be coming to the committee which revised the rules of the House back in 1968 with regard to other phases of parliamentary business, we did not come up with the last word so far as the handling of estimates is concerned. I hope that out of today's experience we will find a way to improve things.

As I see it there is a certain defectiveness in the notices of opposition put forward by the hon. member for Yukon. I do not complain about that. Under the situation that was the only way he could file a statement of his opposition. But I remind you, Sir, and remind him and the House that in Standing Order 58 paragraph (4) and paragraph (10) there is provision only for a notice of opposition to an item in the estimates. The hon. member has not put down notice of opposition to an item but rather notice of opposition to part of an item. The result is, and I say this with respect to my friend the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), that once the hon. member for Yukon puts down a notice of opposition to part of an item, something has to be done to bring the matter before the House and so the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) puts down a notice calling for a vote on the whole of that item. It seems to me he has no option either, because Standing Order 58(10) provides that when the point is reached where we vote on the estimates there is no debate, no amendment and a proposal to reduce the item cannot be made at that time.

Therefore, I suggest there is something defective about the seven notices put down by the hon. member for Yukon in that not one of them is opposition to an item in the estimates but rather opposition to a part of an item in each case. He did that, if I may presume to read his mind, because he is not opposed to the whole item in any one of

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

these cases. This is his way of exercising what he claims to be his parliamentary right to call for certain reductions of items to a lesser figure. So, that is what we are wrestling with in this point of order raised by the hon. member for Peace River. Have we, in changing the rules, lost our effective right to reduce any item in the estimates? If so, is there any way we can get back that right without having to re-write the whole rule with regard to supply?

If I may digress for a moment, the thought occurred to me earlier today that the hon. member for Yukon has put down seven notices of opposition to parts of items in the estimates which cannot be voted on because instead we vote on total items in the name of the President of the Treasury Board, but then the hon. member for Yukon has put down notice of a motion to be debated today unless he refrains from moving it. Standing Order 58 (10) says there shall be no debate on these so-called notices of opposition, but the member by the ingenuity of filing a notice for today sought to arrange debate on those very same items during the course of the day. If I have succeeded in confusing the picture, I think I have a right to do so because that is what we have in respect of this supply procedure. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) says that is what I wanted to do. No. I simply want to point out that the supply procedure which we came up with in 1968 just is not working out as we thought it should.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): If there is no way of doing something along the line suggested by the hon. member for Peace River, either as he put it or in some modified form, then we shall go through the motions today of debating the motion put down by the hon. member for Yukon at the end of which there will be no vote. That debate will simply end at 9.45 and we will have had lots of speeches about DREE, the CBC, contingency items, Information Canada and others. But at 9.45 the Chair will interrupt the debate and there will be no vote on that.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I will be forgiven for interrupting the conversation which is taking place up the gangway a bit. I started to say that once we have ended the debate on the motion of the hon. member for Yukon without a vote, then the motions put down by the President of the Treasury Board will be called. Where my friends of the Progressive Conservative party have sought, for example, to reduce the CBC item by \$59,999 to get at the salary of the president—

● (1530)

Mr. Alexander: Good.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hope that "good" is not attributed to me. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) wants it attributed to him.

Mr. Alexander: Right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The only way for the hon. member for Yukon and the hon. member for Hamilton West to strike out the \$59,999 will be by voting tonight against the whole item amounting to \$232,797,000.