

*Interim Supply*

If one were comparing equals, what we really should consider is the fact that the main estimates for this year total \$5,595 million, compared with \$5,179 million at the same stage of proposed expenditures a year ago. That is an increase of \$416 million. This, in itself, is confusing and I think that the minister in addition, putting at the top of his second paragraph this statement, has done something which has resulted in publicity favourable to him, perhaps, but I do not think it presents the true state of the financial proposals for the coming year. These were the words of the minister, as reported on page 705 of *Hansard* for February 5, 1959. This was the emphasis, the impression, he wanted to give, not only to this house but to the country at large. He said:

The most noteworthy feature is that compared with those for the present year, 1958-59, these estimates provide for a decrease of \$39.1 million in the non-statutory items.

Mr. Chairman, the minister and some of us on this side do at times find difficulty in reconciling our methods of calculation and arithmetic, but I would like the minister to tell us before the item is passed whether or not he has an explanation for what I consider to be a departure from a justifiable practice in arriving at his conclusion, namely that there was a reduction of \$39.1 million in non-statutory expenditures. Because when I examine in the blue estimates book the statement that was prepared a year ago, presented to the press on May 13, 1958, it was calculated that the statutory items amounted to \$1,788 million. This year when the minister is making a comparison between statutory items for last year and this year he refers to an item of \$1,766.8 million. This I found very hard to reconcile; but afterwards I found that, differing from the similar press statement of last year, there has been omitted this year with respect to last year's statutory items an item of \$12 million with respect to the C.B.C., which appears on page 10 of last year's estimates. In addition, in this new figure relating to last year's statutory items, the reference to \$12 million for C.B.C., there is omitted \$10 million with respect to a special statutory item of last year relating to taxation sharing with the provinces on electricity companies. The result is that you have \$22 million which appeared last year as statutory but does not appear the same way this year. If the minister had used the same yardstick, he would not have been able to use the figure of \$39 million, but it would have been \$22 million less than the figure that he used so very conspicuously and prominently put at the masthead of his statement to the house and to the press, which was of course circulated to the country.

[Mr. Benidickson.]

As I say, in addition to that he was comparing, not the main estimates this year with the main estimates at the same stage last year, but related to the main estimates plus all the known expenditures of last year up to date, which included supplementary estimates. This is certainly misleading, and with respect to the statutory item on the C.B.C. which was described as such in last year's estimates at page 10 I frankly cannot account for the failure to include that in the press release figure of approved statutory items for last year. With respect to the special compensation to the provinces of \$10 million to which I have referred, I can see that there has been some change in the intended practice there because last year we did have a special statute which authorized this particular transfer of federal funds to the provinces. However, it had an expiry date limiting its application to one year. This year the item is apparently not intended to be a statutory item, because we have an item in the estimates presumably now non-statutory for this purpose.

The effect of this kind of bookkeeping is that the minister's figure of \$39 million, representing so-called reductions of controllable or non-statutory expenditure, is larger than, I suggest, it is fair for the minister to use in deference to the house. I think matters of this kind should not involve sleight of hand or gimmicks, but that the minister should at all times be completely frank with the house and with the public. I should appreciate knowing why the two items to which I have referred were not included again in this year's press release and why the minister has changed the figure from \$1,788.1 million, representing last year's statutory items, and used this year the figure of \$1,766.8 million.

We have, of course, seen a great deal of inconsistency from the treasury benches this session in relation to what we were led to believe was to be the policy of the government and, in particular, the policy of the Minister of Finance in fiscal and monetary matters. I think the committee is well aware that the minister wasted no time after being sworn in to his present position in June, 1957 before meeting the press, and one of the many things he said would be accomplished under his guidance, as reported in the first paragraph of an article in the *Ottawa Journal* on June 26, 1957, at a press conference was an undertaking that he would declare war on waste and extravagance. I have indicated that comparing the main estimates this year with the main estimates last year we find an increase of \$416 million. I recall some strong statements made by the minister when he was in opposition on this as on many other matters, and again I point out to the committee that he is unduly acrobatic, and that this is