

for amendment, qualification or alteration of an item. There is provision solely and simply for opposition.

Having stated that, I have looked at certain situations which have occurred in the past and I agree with the hon. member that notices of motion in opposition to items which have done more than oppose have been put down. They have attempted to overmodify or amend. However, I do not rest my case on that. I agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that the hon. member for Yukon is not entitled to put these notices of motion on the order paper at all. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre presented the argument that such notices of motion could be put only on the last day of the supply period when the Speaker is obliged to put all outstanding questions at a final moment. I believe I would like to carry the argument one step further and say that what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is really asking is whether today is an allotted day. If it is an allotted day, then the proceeding that is suggested here by the hon. member for Yukon could be regarded as a proper procedure. But there is no provision for this proceeding under our Standing Orders except on an allotted day, and I challenge hon. members on the other side to indicate where, in the Standing Orders, there is a foundation for this proceeding, namely, the proceeding of opposing an item in the estimates, except on an allotted day.

• (1610)

Mr. Nielsen: I will.

Mr. MacEachen: I suggest that there is no such provision. I move on further, Your Honour, to draw attention to Standing Order 58(10), the reading and contemplation of which helped me to clarify in my own mind the exact nature of the problem that we are faced with procedurally. However, before I go to Standing Order 58(10) may I refer to 58(5), in which a discussion is conducted as to the number of sitting days to be allotted to the business of supply. That discussion ends by saying:

These twenty-five days are to be designated as allotted days.

I ask myself, when the Chair is tabulating the 25 allotted days under the Standing Order, is today an allotted day? If it is an allotted day, then at the end of this day there will be left 24 allotted days.

Mr. Nielsen: Of course, it isn't an allotted day.

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member says it is not an allotted day. He has agreed that it is not an allotted day. So, Mr. Speaker, the argument is ended, because if it is not an allotted day there is no possible foundation for this particular proceeding. I leave that case on that very simple ground. It is either an allotted day or not an allotted day.

Then, I ask myself what of the proposition in Standing Order 58(18) in which it is provided that:

In the event of urgency in relation to any estimate or estimates, the proceedings of the House on a motion to concur therein and on the subsequent bill are to be taken under Government Orders and not on days allotted in this order.

Are we proceeding here on a day allotted under Standing Order 58? Obviously, we are not. The hon. member for Yukon has just said so. This is obviously taking place as a

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government order. In a sense, it is a government day because under the new dispensation all the allotted days are opposition days. That was the purpose of it.

I merely say that it is one or the other. If it is an allotted day, the hon. member has a right to put down these proceedings. If today is an allotted day, then there will be 24 left, or the allotted days in this period will be reduced by one. But I cannot see that as a reasonable outcome, because the reason we relied on 58(18) was that in order to bring these estimates under the so-called guillotine, or to have an allotted day to deal with them, it would mean having the House contort itself for a short period of time to clean up seven allotted days before February 7, and you can imagine the screams that would have been heard if we had attempted to do that.

We said, "Let us take our chance. We go to the House without any guillotine, and we treat this situation as any normal bill, without any time allocation." That is what we are doing. There is no question in my mind that if you rule that this is a proceeding under Standing Order 58(18), and not an allotted day, then on second reading there is no time limitation, in committee of the whole there is no time limitation, and on third reading there is no time limitation. I confess that the House is totally free to deal with the matter without limitation on any of these stages, although I would hope the House would take account of the necessity for replenishing the programs that are involved in these estimates.

That was a risk we took in making up our minds to proceed this way. The only question that bothers me at this point is, if the motions put down by the hon. member for Yukon are ruled as improper proceedings, then is the main motion put down by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) a debatable motion? It is obviously a votable one. It has to be concurred in or not concurred in. However, is it debatable?

Hon. members will recall that before we abolished the committee of supply, we would have discussed the estimates in that committee. But we abolished the committee of supply, and we used the standing committees to do the work that had been done formerly in the committee of supply. So, today we are in a sense at that stage following the completion of the work of the committee of supply, but in this case the work was completed by the standing committee.

Before we adopted the new rules there is no question as to what the situation would have been. The supply resolutions coming out of the committee of supply would have been concurred in without debate or without amendment, and if on this question we wanted to follow an exact parallel we would divide without debate or an amendment. But on that point, I really have not been able to reach a firm conclusion. It would be my feeling that it is somewhat incompatible with the over-all system of supply, incompatible with the regime we are following under Standing Order 58(18), to have an extended debate on a motion to concur in the estimates, which estimates have already been dealt with extensively in the standing committee. If the motion is not debatable and if it is concurred in, then it is clear that it will bring an appropriation bill before the House, and that bill is without time limit at any stage.