

Supply—Labour

Mr. Churchill: We have a translation system.

Mr. Caouette: When he refers to small groups of eight or nine people, may I remind him that there is more intelligence among the members of our group than there is among the 96 members of his group who up to date have been recognized. I think I have the right to be heard as well as the member for Winnipeg South Centre, without any discrimination or reference to his strong 96 members in the House of Commons. I have been elected, as well as the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, and perhaps with a stronger majority than he; so I have the right to be listened to in the House of Commons.

Mr. Churchill: We all know how smart you are; you do not have to keep telling us every day.

Mr. Caouette: I hope in the future you will remember.

● (3:00 p.m.)

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Dubé): Order, please.

Mr. Churchill: I rise on a point of order. It has not been ruled on. When a minister of the crown makes a statement in this house the opportunity of reply should go first to the opposition and not to somebody in the far corner, no matter how excellent he is in his own opinion. I do not share his opinion of his excellence by any means.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Chairman, may I speak on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. I believe that the hon. member for Villeneuve has as much right as anyone to speak in this house. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that, the minister having just completed his opening statement, the first questions directed to him should come from the Conservative party, a member of which should have been given the first opportunity to speak. That, I think, is the established practice. The Chairman, of course, may not have seen a Conservative member rise immediately following the minister's statement. I am sure that this whole thing has been unintentional. However, I think the practice that has been established for the past several years ought to be maintained.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Dubé): Order, please. I appreciate what has been said. The first hon. member recognized by the Chair was

from the official opposition, but then the hon. member for Villeneuve rose and the Chair recognized him. As soon as he has finished the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon.

Mr. Churchill: That is discrimination, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, my comments on the explanations given a few minutes ago by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Nicholson) will be brief. His explanations boil down to this; his department is becoming less important, even though the labour question is gaining importance and ground throughout Canada. As for the minister, he is losing ground. That is precisely what he just told us. His department, which spent \$34,070,100 last year for labour organization, sees, this year, its estimates cut down by \$23,556,700. And the Minister of Labour tells us that this is due to a large extent to the estimates which the officials of his department were unable to study concerning house building in the country or in any province.

In fact, for 1966-67, the expenditures of the department amount to \$10,513,400 compared to \$34,070,100.

I put a question last week to which the minister answered at noon today, saying that the amounts granted as loans for house building remained the same.

Last night in the town of Gatineau I met housing contractors who said bluntly: "We cannot obtain anything from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This puts us in a difficult situation".

[*English*]

Mr. Churchill: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Caouette: Yes.

Mr. Nicholson: Was the hon. member not in the house when it was announced that housing would not be discussed when we dealt with the main estimates, but at a later time, partly because there are no estimates respecting Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation before the house?

Mr. Churchill: No. He was not here.

Mr. Nicholson: I did agree, since the subject of housing affects employment and labour, that housing might be discussed after