

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 21, 1975

The House met at 11 a.m.

[English]

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### DELAY IN DISTRIBUTION OF YESTERDAY'S "HANSARD"

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Hon. members will have noticed that their edition of *Hansard* is not on their desks. I should explain that a combination of factors have contributed to a delay in *Hansard* this morning, perhaps the most important of which is computer difficulty. It is expected that *Hansard* will be distributed at about noon today.

\* \* \*

## PRIVILEGE

### MR. WOOLLIAMS—PROCEDURE IN DEALING WITH SUPPLY

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a very important question of privilege affecting parliament and therefore the privileges of every member of parliament. I think all members will agree with me that one of the most important functions of parliament, and therefore the duty and responsibility of a member of parliament, is to scrutinize—question, as it were—and interrogate the government in reference to estimated expenditures of the various departments of government. This responsibility becomes more important to members who are not supporters of the government. I make nothing of that except to point out that the duty and responsibility of opposition members must be to make certain that careful scrutiny of expenditures is carried out.

Every member of parliament has a mandate to make certain that taxpayers' money is spent wisely, correctly, and according to the law. I am well aware that the new rules change the method of considering the estimates, but I do not interpret the rules to mean that the government can bring forward a bill a few seconds before they ask for interim supply as set out in clause 2 of the bill, appropriating certain sums of money for the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 1976, in the amount of \$4,603,596,900.59.

I understand the rule is that once a motion for supply is put—and I shall refer to that in a moment—as it was last evening, and voted upon, the government can then ask for interim supply. I have no argument with that. I am well aware that if the bill is properly presented and is prepared according to the rules of this House, the rules say there can be no debate. However, the Chairman of the committee of supply of the whole House stated that we could ask questions: questions were asked by my colleague, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens), and they were disallowed and no answers were given.

I question very strongly whether—when you read clause 2 of the bill in question and then the details of how the \$4,603,596,900 is made up—that the government can ask for three-twelfths of the estimates and then ask for additional sums of money on top of that. What I am saying—and I want to drive home the point, with the greatest respect—is that the government asks for interim supply, as it can, of three-twelfths of the total estimates. I want to emphasize that even when the government does that, none of those estimates are first fully considered by the standing committees. However, they ask for the approval of eight-twelfths of the total amount in several items in schedule A. Let us consider one of these items. They ask for a loan of \$135 million for the CNR. If you add three-twelfths to eight-twelfths, you come up with eleven-twelfths. In other words, through the method of interim supply they receive the approval of the House for almost twelve-twelfths of the item in schedule A without the item first being given full consideration by the appropriate standing committee considering the taxpayers' money.

● (1110)

That is why many of us were wrought up last night, and so we should have been. The taxpayers of this nation expect us to be angry.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Woolliams:** I ask, was this done because the government did not want the committee to examine the reasons for that loan? All this was done prior to the estimates being considered by the appropriate standing committee. Surely no rules of the House were devised to mean that the government should be given control of all the money through interim supply without the committees first examining the estimates.

Law is not an exact science: I have stood in every court in this land and I know that that is so. Some people say a rule means this, and others say it means that. The rules that were devised are supposed to be reasonable and workable. I ask, what happened last night? As I said, I believe the government has a right to ask for interim supply, but not by this method of presenting an additional amount such as I pointed out in respect of the item for the CNR, and many other items. I do not want to take up too much time of the House on this. All I will say is that I believe the rules of the House were breached last night, thus affecting my privileges and the privileges of every member of parliament who has a mandate from the taxpayers of Canada.

Standing Order 58(10) reads as follows:

If the motion under consideration at the hour of interruption is a no-confidence motion, the Speaker first shall put forthwith, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of that proceeding, and forthwith thereafter put successively, without