

supplementary estimates, it has the responsibility to call the standing committee and give it an opportunity to examine the spending plans of the government.

I also draw attention to Vote 20c found under employment and immigration, which wants to transfer the expenditure of \$686,999 from one vote to another. Again I suggest that some money is saved, but the government still wants to spend it. However, I cannot give a definitive statement because a standing committee has never been called and has not had an opportunity to consider the supplementary estimates.

Vote 25c is a very large one dealing with immigration. It transfers \$18,304,999 from employment and immigration, vote 15, to be used for another purpose, and the government is doing it under the guise of a one dollar supplementary estimate. Again, I cannot say whether this move is wise because the chairman of the standing committee, the vice-chairman and the majority of the voting members are members of the government party and they have not given the opposition an opportunity to consider the supplementary estimates of this department.

If I turn to the Department of Labour, I find a similar pattern. Vote 1c is a supplementary estimate of \$105,000; vote 5c is for \$370,000. This is a statutory payment increase of \$1,500,000, for a total change of \$1,975,000. I am embarrassed to be standing in this House not able to say whether that is a wise expenditure decision or not, because the chairman and vice-chairman of that committee are members of the governing party, the majority of committee members are members of the governing party, and they have not called a meeting or given the opposition an opportunity to examine the wisdom of these spending estimates.

● (1630)

I suggest that the protection of members of this House, on behalf of the constituents they represent, lies in Standing Order 58(15), which clearly provides that no supplementary estimate can be passed by this House without at least the condition being met that the standing committee of the House be given the opportunity to consider it and to ask questions of the minister and his officials about the planned expenditure.

I have just received a note from the lobby, Madam Speaker, stating that members who sit on the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works have been similarly treated by the government. Therefore, so far as the estimates which relate to the functioning of the Department of Public Works are concerned, if you rule as I think you must on the point that I raised, then it would not be appropriate for this House to pass the estimates of that department either.

The two departments whose estimates I had the obligation to examine in committee, if that committee had been called, dealt with taxpayers' money in excess of \$35 million. That figure is not taken from the main estimates, which run into hundreds of millions of dollars, but from the supplementary estimates. The government chooses to spend some \$35 million, money that it was saving but now wants to spend in some other fashion. It chooses to do so in a manner which does not allow

Point of Order—Mr. Andre

me to question the wisdom of that spending on behalf of my constituents.

I have been informed by a voice in the chamber that the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture has not met either. I therefore suggest that any supplementary estimates relating to the functioning of that committee must also be found ineligible to be passed by this chamber, based on Standing Order 58(15) which requires that members of Parliament be given the opportunity to consider supplementary estimates.

I would encourage you, Madam Speaker, to inquire from the Clerk of the House whether the three situations that I have brought to your attention are the only situations of that kind or whether there are others.

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vanvouver Quadra): Madam Speaker, I want to intervene briefly at this point. I will not repeat the very sage and cogent arguments made by the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre). The hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) covered some points that I had intended to make so I shall deal with one or two that have been missed, particularly with regard to the Department of Agriculture's Supplementary Estimates (C) at page 10. There is a suggestion that the gross program supplement of \$62,803,000 should be reduced by funds transferred to other votes. In other words, we are being asked to approve a net amount of \$58,613,000 instead of the gross expenditure of \$62,803,000. This involves the principle referred to earlier of transferring credits from one area to another when approval has not been given for the gross expenditure requested.

On pages 32 and 34 the estimates of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources suggest that Eldorado Nuclear Limited, under a \$1 vote, be authorized to increase its borrowing limits from \$130 million to \$280 million. This is an increase of \$150 million under the guise of a \$1 vote. This will increase the debts of the Government of Canada by that amount in the manner referred to by the hon. member for Calgary Centre. The normal procedure is to pass a specific bill for borrowing or for increases in government debt of this kind.

There is an item on page 32 which I do not fully understand. It purports to be a transfer of title by the minister to Eldorado Nuclear Limited in the uranium stockpiles recorded in the accounts of Canada at a value of \$76 million. In other words, under a \$1 vote the minister would be able to turn over \$76 million to Eldorado Nuclear Limited.

Page 34 deals with the Department of the Environment and shows the transfer of \$2,371,000 from a different vote to vote 5c under the guise of a \$1 item.

I think you have had enough examples, Madam Speaker, and I do not need to go on; the point has been well made. I support the comments of my two colleagues from Calgary and ask that you declare this procedure to be beyond the powers of the government.

Madam Speaker: Far from being a new matter, this is one which has been brought before the House from time to time.