

*Interim Supply*

The mistake which was made was smuggled into the book of estimates for the year ending March 31, 1967, the fiscal year which is now coming to an end. My recollection is that during the last two years, in 1965 and 1966, the estimates of the Department of National Defence were put through the house by the use of the guillotine. There was a very restricted debate and it was not noted that in the estimates for 1966 the introductory paragraph to vote 15 had been materially altered as compared with previous years. This is where the trouble arose. I now want to refer to the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1966 where the introductory formula to vote 15 reads as follows:

Operation, maintenance and construction or acquisition of buildings, works, land and major equipment for the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Now the book of estimates for the coming fiscal year, 1967-68 repeats the introductory paragraph which was smuggled in last year, and is again in error, because according to the National Defence Act the Canadian forces consist of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Heretofore the estimates have appeared under these appropriate headings and a comparison has been made between the new fiscal year and the old fiscal year. In the estimates now in front of us for 1967-68 there is no possibility of discovering what amount of money the government proposes to spend on the Royal Canadian Navy or the Army or the Royal Canadian Air Force for the coming fiscal year, in order to relate these sums to the amounts spent in the past fiscal year. They have all been grouped together, and we have a new division into the commands which the Minister of National Defence has set up.

I have no objection to the expenditures of those commands being set out separately, but they should have been listed in addition to the information supplied with regard to the cost of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force. This was the substance of the question of privilege we raised on March 14 and I raise it again, now, not as a question of privilege but as a warning to the government that although we propose tonight because we are co-operative, to pass interim supply for one month, we reserve the right to raise this question again and obtain a settlement of this matter before the fiscal year is consumed.

[Mr. Churchill.]

• (10:30 p.m.)

We think it is absolutely wrong to do this without the approval of the house and without consultation with the standing committee on public accounts. It is absolutely wrong to fail to give the house and the people of Canada an exact assessment of the proposed expenditures in relation to the three armed services which are still in existence. These three armed services will remain in existence until the Canada Defence Act is altered. It has not been altered yet.

This house has not changed that act, and even if the proposed amendments to that act which are to abolish the three armed services pass this house later on this year, we have the word of the minister himself that four to six months will elapse before the new act will be proclaimed. At a rough guess, that means that anywhere from five to eight months will elapse before the three armed services are completely abolished, and before the new set of estimates would have application to their changed formation. So, for a great part of the coming fiscal year, the estimates presented to us give a false picture. This is what I am objecting to tonight, and I am reserving for my party the right to raise this question again, whether it be during the course of some other debate, or when the next application for interim supply comes before us.

Meantime I give a friendly warning to the government, this sometimes inflexible, sometimes immovable government, to change its ways and make the alteration which we are now suggesting. It would be a simple matter on an issue as important as this to delay the operation of this house until the change is made, but I am counting on the good sense of the Minister of National Revenue and of the Minister of Finance to have this change made.

It is not too difficult to do. We are not asking for the whole group of estimates to be altered. We are asking for these few pages dealing with the Department of National Defence to be set up in the form in which they were a year ago. That is not impossible for the Department of National Defence and the Department of Finance to arrange. It is a simple request and I hope when the estimates finally come before the house they will be in the proper form. If that happens, when the next request is made for interim supply we will not raise the objection I have been raising tonight, and which I raise with regret because of the long and hard session we have had, and the long hours. But, always staunch in doing my duty, I bring this to the attention of the House of Commons.