

Disposition of Supply Motions

If we refer to Standing Order 58(10) subsection (10) of the same section, Mr. Speaker, we find once more the same formula, and I quote:

... the Speaker... shall put forthwith successively, without debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of any item of business relating to interim supply, main estimates, and supplementary or final estimates...

Unfortunately, that is precisely the situation in which we find ourselves.

The hon. member had the opportunity, under procedures which I consider antiquated, to demonstrate his opposition to the estimates in committee. In the House, however, at the final adoption stage, considering the precedents set in this House, particularly the one on which I was the victim, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that you should rule such amendments out of order.

The members of the opposition can use the days made available under Standing Order 58(3), for example, relating to the business of supply. They are free to object to the adoption of estimates, but not with the means used tonight.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, regretfully but honestly, I must lean towards the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the President of the Privy Council, although in my heart I would share the opinion of the hon. member for Yukon.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not sure whether hon. members are satisfied that the Chair has been satisfied with the enlightening arguments which have been submitted for its guidance. It is hardly necessary to go back into the details to which I referred earlier this evening. The fact is that earlier today the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) rose on a point of order and indicated that he took exception to the notices which have been mentioned during the last few minutes, one being notice of an amendment to a specific item in the estimates and the other being a notice of opposition to a specific item in the estimates.

Hon. members who have taken part in this argument, particularly the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), referred at length to the fact that hon. members in the past have sought to question part of a vote rather than the whole item itself, and attempts have been made from time to time to have the House divide on a reduced item or on part of an item in the estimates.

I think that each time we have reached this situation we have had the argument made that the rules as they stand—the rules which were amended in 1968 and which came into force in 1969—did not make it possible for hon. members, as they had been interpreted in any event, to have the House divide at any time on a part of an item, or to move by way of amendment to reduce an item in the estimates. However, as hon. members will understand, I have to go by the Standing Orders as they are now.

I have said on many occasions that perhaps this procedure which we have adopted in relation to estimates may be weak and perhaps it should be changed. Obviously, it has caused so much difficulty that we should as soon as possible, in due course, look again at that procedure and find some way to consider estimates which will be more

[Mr. Fortin.]

satisfactory to hon. members. But the Standing Orders are there and it is pretty difficult for the Chair to ignore them. The Standing Order which is relevant is, of course, the one to which hon. members have referred, Standing Order 58(10) which reads in part:

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 debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of any item of business relating to interim supply—

The hon. member for Yukon has referred to citations and precedents which, as I understood them, predate the rule changes of 1968. Standing Order 58, which is part of the new rules, determines clearly what questions and motions can be put as part of the supply proceedings. The hon. member said a moment ago that there was no procedural way in which part of an estimate or an item can be put to the House for a vote. I have suggested on previous occasions that this could be done but, with respect, I do not think the way in which he has attempted to do it this evening is the way to do it. Indeed, I believe that on a previous occasion the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) on a supply day brought into question a number of specific items. These items, since they were motions before the House, could be debated and they were subject to amendments attempting to reduce them. But that is not the situation we have before us at the present time.

It seems to me that the Standing Order is very clear, that there can be no debate at this point; and if there can be no debate, there can be no amendment. The hon. member, it seems to me, is attempting to do indirectly, by giving notice of his intention to move an amendment, that which he cannot do directly, and that is to have the floor at this time and at this point to debate the motion and move an amendment thereto.

We are left, therefore, with the notice of opposition itself. I am trying to make a distinction between the amendment, which is the first part of the hon. member's procedure, and the notice of motion. I suggest to him that the amendment is entirely irregular and I do not see how the Chair, even by stretching a point, could say it could be put to the House at this time. As I say, we are then left with the notice of opposition.

I must say that I have serious reservations about the nature or the wording of the notice of objection filed by the hon. member as it appears on the notice paper. The hon. member seeks, through this notice of objection, to reduce an item by \$16,999.99. Actually, the notice of objection has to be a notice that should not include argument and should not attempt indirectly to reduce an item which is not actually before the House. The Chair is willing to overlook that aspect of the notice of objection filed by the hon. member for this very reason, that by the fact that the notice was received and was filed it compelled the inclusion in the notice paper of a motion in the name of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury), so that we have in fact before us now the motion of the President of the Treasury Board. I might rule that the motion is irregularly before us, but I think that might perhaps be stretching the point because we are still, even after a few years, working our way around the understanding and the interpretation of these rules, particularly Standing Order 58. If