

should be reduced. This is a fundamental right, Mr. Speaker, and all of us who were here at the time the committee of supply flourished are well aware of the procedure that then existed. When votes were being put before the old committee of supply for consideration, it was competent for any hon. member to move that a vote be reduced. That was common practice. It was not done continuously, as hon. members had to consider the merits and the substance, but it was done from time to time. If there was a minister who engaged in actions which were repugnant to the House, or a civil servant who engaged in a similar practice, it was possible for a member of this House, sitting in committee of supply, to move a motion to reduce his salary or some of his departmental expenditures.

● (1510)

I recognize that this right has been largely taken away, but I intend to urge very strongly that this House and Your Honour give effect to a method by which, at least in part, it can be retained. It would be my suggestion that we should move at once, without having the motion put by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), to the consideration of the motions to concur, in the name of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury). Those motions should be put forthwith and followed through consecutively, then followed, of course, by the motion to concur in the unopposed estimates. In this way we would move at once to the bill which will follow the estimates, and at that time we would arrive at the stage in committee of the whole of considering the schedule. There would be available then to members of this House sitting in committee of the whole an opportunity for at least some limited debate in a manner somewhat reminiscent of what existed prior to 1969. Members of the House would then have an opportunity to put amendments, to discuss and debate some of the estimates.

My friend, the hon. member for Yukon, has carefully listed those items which he proposed to challenge on behalf of this party, and in respect of which we seek an opportunity to have the House divide. This is an opposition day and I think this House and Your Honour should be diligent and ingenious in attempting to restore at least to some extent that great privilege, the right to challenge and reduce votes in the House.

I see no reason that the hon. member for Yukon need put his motion. This is a vehicle which is essential, and I see that Your Honour is interested in this point. While this is a vehicle, I submit that if the motion is not put, or even if it has to be put, it is not essential that it be debated and we can move forthwith to the motions to concur, and thereby arrive at the appropriation bill. I would, therefore, at this time, subject to hearing arguments from other members of the House, propose that this procedure be adopted, and that this House lay upon itself the responsibility of devising a method by which certain of the votes may be the subject of discussion and of decision.

As I say, by the time we have gone through the motions of the President of the Treasury Board to concur, as well as to concur in the unopposed items, there is not a great deal of time left. I suggest that if that time is not made available, then the question of supply will be turned into an utter farce and will become a nullity. This House, in effect at the instigation of the government, when it comes

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to the question of supply and voting a number of estimates, will become a kangaroo court. In that event, we might as well shut up shop and go home.

I urge that this should not be the case and that we do not leave this House today with the decision of the House and the Chair that there is no longer any means of challenging an item in the estimates. That is the point of order I make and I propose that this method be adopted. I challenge the government to co-operate and to see that this means is effected so that these matters can be dealt with, to at least the extent set out in the notice of the hon. member for Yukon. If the government does not do this the consequences will fall on its head.

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

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with some diffidence, having listened to the learned argument of my colleague, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), to add to the discussion at this time. I put it to Your Honour that what we are doing is reviewing and re-establishing the purpose of that stage of debate in this House we are undergoing today.

This all goes back to the change in the House rules in 1968 whereby the committee of supply was abolished. In no way in the mind of anyone, except perhaps the proposer of those rule changes and those who wish to close off debate by closure, did the change indicate that this House was abdicating one iota of its control over Crown expenditures. What has transpired since in the form of legalistic semantics has had the result of opening the door to complete stultification of that primary purpose of parliament. If this House, on this and on other occasions is prohibited from indicating its opposition to any item in the estimates we are wasting our time. The words in the rules refer to opposition to any item, whether by way of notice or by way of a formal motion, and the choice matters little. In this way this House can indicate its opposition to an item or items in the estimates, and this House must have the opportunity of debating that opposition.

This is an allotted opposition day; it is not a government day, and government motions are the last to be considered. If one reads Standing Order 58(10), he will see that the sequence matters not, but that there is provision for restoration or reinstatement when a total estimate is being voted out as a result of a decision of the committee, and there have been occasions when votes have been altered by the committee. That is what is covered by a motion for restoration. We also have provision for reinstatement and for opposition to any item. Does a motion of the government take precedence? I suggest not, because this is an opposition day. The notice of motion is the item that takes precedence as I conceive the rules, and I arrive at that conception as one who has worked on the rules and realized that the intention is not to stultify the effectiveness of this House.

● (1520)

The government has posted a formal notice of so-called restoration to opposition, but that is premature. The government motions are premature. There is opposition to an item or part of an item. Why does it require a motion to restore it? It has not been changed. The only place there