

Interim Supply

say yes or no to government proposals. This, I suggest, is not what the vast body of experience over the generations has indicated should be the function of the House of Commons. That is the second point.

The third point was the measures adopted by the government in order to meet the civil service payroll. Now, for the purposes of my argument I am not going to enter into the merits of the debate which preceded that decision. It is and has been established, and is written into the foundations of parliamentary government, that we must retain at all times the right to refuse supply if, in our view, there is a legitimate and honest complaint which needs to be ventilated. As to whether or not it is an honest and legitimate complaint, in the final analysis not the government but the electorate will decide, and when a party takes that position it is entitled to maintain it.

What has the government done in this instance? Just a few minutes ago the minister indicated that he had taken a certain procedure with regard to the supply votes. Now with respect to that, as I say, I believe we will require a parliamentary committee and the Auditor General's report, which I hope will be produced quite shortly. But I want to turn my attention to vote 15, and to read to hon. members the wording of vote 15 which, I would point out, has changed over the years.

Vote 15, as it appears in the blue book of estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1967, reads as follows:

Contingencies—To supplement other votes and to provide for miscellaneous minor and unforeseen expenses not otherwise provided for including awards under the Public Servants Inventions Act—

When we turn back to the estimates for 1960, we find a completely different wording. At that time what is now vote 15 appeared as vote 116, and the wording was very different:

Miscellaneous minor or unforeseen expenses, subject to the approval of the Treasury Board, including authority to re-use any sums repaid to this appropriation—

Obviously there has been a change in the wording.

I would also point out, Mr. Chairman, that in 1960 the amount involved was slightly over \$1 million. For the year 1967 the amount is \$15 million in the original estimates, and we have no idea what it may yet come to when the supplementaries are added to it. As a matter of fact, for the preceding year the amount was \$29 million.

I suggest that if you take these words in their proper legal sense, although I reserve

[Mr. Baldwin.]

the right to argue that, it may well be that the government was justified in its course. But surely, it was never intended that a vote of this kind could be used by the government for the purposes to which the minister has put it. I suggest this constitutes a violation of the the purposes to which the minister has put it. I suggest this constitutes a violation of the principle of parliamentary control.

If the government can put \$15 million in this vote, why can't it put \$150 million in it? True enough, the matter comes back to the house. It is a vote; it is an appropriation, but a government with a majority has the right to do that, and no doubt certain governments will use that right. When I say governments, Mr. Chairman, I use the word "government" generally, although I must say the present government has a remarkable proclivity toward the undue exercise of executive power.

I suggest that such use of a vote of this kind constitutes a grave violation of the principle of parliamentary control, and I have with me some brief citations from some learned people who have considered this very same serious problem.

As a matter of fact, the history of this problem goes back to the year 1340 when the first recorded grant made to Edward III was for "the maintenance and safeguard of our said realm of England, and on wars in Scotland, France and Gascoign". There was a limit placed on the expenditure. Since that time that principle has been maintained, but today it is being whittled away, step by step, stage by stage.

Responsible government cannot be a reality if the control of expenditure is surrendered to the treasury, and this is a surrender to the treasury. The right of parliament to control taxation and appropriation is based on common law, but of course it is now given statutory form. Most contemporary writers on the subject agree that parliamentary control of finance is in danger of becoming non-existent, and that it is high time parliament did something about it.

The decline of parliamentary influence is one of the effects of this development, and the problem of restoring parliamentary effectiveness is a matter of improving the means of informing parliament, a means which I hoped would have been found within the limits of the committee system which the government set up but which, in my humble opinion, has now proved to be almost useless.

I submit that here, in this one instance, the refusal to allow serving officers to give their