

Appropriation Act No. 8

which meant that all wages throughout the civil service had to be increased greatly throughout the year.

Mr. Bigg: I will take the minister's word that everything done was not only legal, but was so according to the best legal opinion. I do not think what he has said should end the discussion of this matter either in parliament or in committee. It seems to me that the very basis of parliamentary control over the executive is being eroded and almost completely destroyed. If vote 15 can be enlarged, no matter for what good purpose,—the purpose might sound good enough to get by an alert public accounts committee such as we have at the present time—parliament will still be faced with this very dangerous method by which its powers can be circumvented. That should be clearly pointed out to the committee. The very fact that what was done was legal, in no way detracts from the necessity of making sure that in future such a course will not be legal. We, in this house, make the law, and unless we know where the law is weak we cannot improve it.

If the law is adequate in the opinion of parliament, we should leave it alone. But I, for one, think that here, in this situation, we have a danger. If the government can increase vote 15 to \$110 million, they can increase it to a much greater extent. An emergency such as has occurred may never again come before us. My hon. friend from Carleton has suggested that the law should be amended so that civil servants, members of the armed forces, the mounted police and certain crown corporations essential to the welfare of the country, corporations such as Air Canada, should be exempt from the present form of parliamentary control.

It is not good enough to say that we have had a legal opinion. The fact that this legal opinion has been given is an added reason, in my opinion, for looking into this matter thoroughly and quickly.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman, I have done considerable work this morning getting the figures for vote 15 from 1954 to date. I ask the Minister of National Revenue, when he talks about this tremendous increase in vote 15 to \$110 million, whether that great increase was taken up entirely with the pay increases to which he has made reference, or will there be added hocus-pocus when the question of civil service salaries comes up—next.

[Mr. Benson.]

Mr. Benson: There has been no hocus-pocus used. If we look back at vote 15, as it is now, it will be seen that it used to be two votes. One was for supplementary estimates—

Mr. Cowan: Vote 70?

Mr. Benson: Vote 70, which was put through separately. The other vote was for general contingencies. The two votes had been combined into one. In addition to this, in the past year, as my hon. friend knows, there was a great increase in salaries. I can assure him that the majority of money in that vote is for that purpose, though not all the money is for that purpose. I shall be pleased to give him an analysis of everything that has been charged to the account. Of course, amounts have been repaid, because amounts are often repaid when supplementary estimates come through. I shall be pleased to give him the breakdown at my earliest convenience.

Mr. Cowan: In commenting upon the remarks of the Minister of National Revenue in which he points out that there has been a combination of votes 70 and 15, I would not have the house come to the conclusion that previously, when these votes were passed separately they amounted to a figure anywhere near that contained in vote 15 at this time.

I went back to 1954, 1955 and 1956 to find estimates as passed by Liberal governments of that day. It will be interesting to note, I am certain, that the item for supplementals to paylists in those years ran as low as \$750,000, and \$1.5 million. These figures are in Liberal estimates for 1954, 1955 and 1956. They came under vote 70 to which reference has been made. Sometimes vote 70 was changed and tabled as vote 124 or 119 or 117.

Of course, the government also had the contingency reserve. In 1954 it was \$1 million. In 1955 it was \$1 million. In 1956 it was \$1 million. In 1957 it was \$1.5 million. In 1958 it was \$1.5 million. In 1959 it was \$1.5 million. In 1960 it was \$1.5 million. In 1961 it was \$1.5 million. In 1962 it was \$1.5 million. In 1963 it was \$3 million; that was item 15. In 1964 it was \$3 million in the main estimates, plus \$7 million under supplementals. In 1965 it was \$6 million. I have not had a chance to examine the supplementals at all.

• (4:20 p.m.)

In 1966 the request was for \$6 million on vote 15, plus \$60 million in supplementaries; and in 1967 we are asked for \$15 million. We have already passed that amount under the