

Dollar Items

introduce into appropriation bills handling supplementary estimates borrowing powers that were beyond the resolutions. I had to protest. Finally this administration learned its lesson when Mr. Speaker ruled those items out of the appropriation act.

If we want some historical precedent, these rules came into force in 1969. Final supplementary estimates came into being and were presented, as now, toward the end of the fiscal year. This is quite understandable because there are many items that are not identifiable until near the end of the fiscal year. We had a two week period of study in 1969, as we have now. For the benefit of those bodies over on the government side who are being critical of the opposition, most of these hon. members do not turn up in committee. They do not know what goes on in committee. Certainly the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council does not know what goes on in committee.

Mr. Goodale: You would be surprised.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I will show him that supplementary estimates of close to \$1 billion were made available to committees on March 8, and up to March 22 there were 14 calendar days, ten parliamentary sitting days. It is said that the opposition should have raised these \$1 items somewhere sometime in the House before this date. I want to advise the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council, who has shown his abysmal ignorance of the rules, that while committees have assigned to them the estimates, it is impossible for the point to be raised in this House because the Chair will say that all arguments and objections must be put in committee. You cannot have it both ways in both places.

Technically by the rules, yesterday afternoon was the first time that those estimates were deemed to be before the House. They had to be reported within three calendar days before the last supply motion, or Friday noon last. That is why, at my request, the supply motion was advanced to the Tuesday rather than the Thursday of this week. Since the period of expiry for consideration in committee was Friday noon, therefore yesterday afternoon, on the opening of this House, the estimates were deemed to have been reported back within the competence of this House. The suggestion made by Mr. Speaker that questions of this nature shall be considered on the penultimate of the allotted days just cannot stand up to the rules, unless we change them.

An hon. Member: Change them.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Did someone say "change them"?

An hon. Member: Yes, change them.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): We made efforts to get fundamental changes in the rules last summer, but the government caucus bogged down and the government leader in the House refuses to bring forward, as I pointed out the other day, even a modified and limited reference to the committee on

procedure in order to bring in some things about which we have some understanding.

An hon. Member: Almost nothing.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It is not possible to raise the question of \$1 items in the House while a committee has them under consideration. The parliamentary secretary had better look at his rules. It does not arise at all in the question of the main estimates since there are no \$1 items in the main estimates. It arises in supplementary estimates, and particularly in final supplementary estimates.

If the parliamentary secretary will also do some reading and if he will look at the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, on February 27, 1969, the report of the committee carried this resolution, which was my motion, which reads:

Resolved—that the committee express its concern at the extensive use of \$1.00 items for the purpose of statutory amendments particularly in final supplementary estimates which are under time limit as to examination in the standing committee and for debate in the House. Appropriate legislative amendments should be made in all but the most exceptional and urgent cases.

Based on that there was a debate. The then president of the treasury board said that there were a few points that had been made to which he wished to reply. He referred to the remarks of the committee which expressed its concern. He repeated most of what I have given to the House as the conclusion. He went on to say that the hon. member for Edmonton West drew attention to the fact that even Liberal members of the committee supported this expression of concern. That is a fact, and one of the members who supported me in that observation is the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie). I agree with those members and I share their concern. I think parliament should be concerned about the unwarranted extension of so-called legislation by \$1 items. Their own minister, the minister responsible for the introduction of supplementary estimates, states that he was concerned.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council said, "Why does not the opposition argue the substance of those particular items?" What? Items that are illegally before the House? They are not properly before the House. Mr. Speaker has ruled out of order. Why should we argue them?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They are not before us. It is just like trying to argue a charge before a court with the court saying that there is no charge. The thing is not here. It is non-existent, illegal.

● (1750)

Mr. Goodale: You are missing the point.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Some items in the estimates have been before the House, or before the committee, less than two weeks. Let the parliamentary secretary note how much sitting time was available to each committee for the examination of these estimates. Were ministers available?