

Supply—Justice

thinks this is a very bad situation. My point to him is that this procedure has been followed for 20 years. I do have some questions in my mind about it, but—

Mr. Orlikow: The procedures will be followed for another 20 years if it is left up to you.

Mr. Cashin: That is another interruption which will be recorded in the annals of the House of Commons history when the history of the sixties is written, as suggested by a member earlier tonight.

The point is that neither the hon. member for Winnipeg North, nor any of his party, is ever likely to be in a position to make this kind of decision. I think it is important that the two parties over there, who are apt to have a chance to make these decisions, however small it may be, should consider these matters. I believe there should be more public debate on matters of this kind.

One of the things that has always disturbed me, as well as many other Canadians, is the fact that there is a lack of real, open, public discussion on matters of this kind. We have had a great many situations in Canada which have been considered and discussed in secret. I think that points to the monolithic decisions we have seen from time to time which hamper the kind of public discussion on issues which could make our institution of parliament more credible to the public. No wonder the United States citizens can get so excited that it may seem irrational to us from time to time. In their system they can see the Senate on television debating publicly a matter such as the Viet Nam situation. We in this country do not have that kind of public debate or public expression not only on this subject but on a wide variety of subjects.

● (8:40 p.m.)

I certainly do not want to suggest that my rather insignificant interruption in the debate tonight—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cashin: —is going to do very much to further that proposition but I do think there should be more of it.

Mr. Knowles: You should be on television.

Mr. Cashin: I might say to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre—I think it was he who made a crack about television—that if

I were he I would stay away from the camera altogether.

There are a number of other comments I should like to have made. I did not realize that members of the opposition would find my remarks so stimulating and refreshing that they would keep interrupting me at such great length. I hope that perhaps in a year's time, if we are all still here, when the estimates of the Department of Justice come before us we may have an opportunity again to discuss this matter and perhaps find the government in the position to advise us on the kind of policy to be adopted in future cases, a policy that would be more consistent with that which many of us would like to see adopted.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Cashin: Yes.

Mr. Brewin: I was very much impressed with the hon. member's tribute to the concern of himself for the other members of his party in regard to liberties in the future. Can the hon. member explain why he does not think these principles should be applied in the present case? Is this not like the expression, all is jam tomorrow but never jam today?

Mr. Cashin: I do not agree, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me the answer is that we do not change the procedure in the middle of a case. This procedure has been adopted for 20 years. This case has won a great deal of publicity; therefore the Minister of Justice, presumably the Solicitor General, and the Prime Minister have had an opportunity to look at this matter in more detail than ordinarily might be the case. I accept their judgment, as I might well have accepted the words of the right hon. Leader of the Opposition were he in the same position.

The point is this. I do not think it is acceptable as a general rule to have this kind of procedure over a long term. We have followed this procedure for 20 years; I would like to see it changed. I do not see the need to change it in the Spencer case but I should like to see it changed at the earliest possible date.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Knowles: Two of a kind.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Chairman, somebody said, "Two of a kind" but I have always