

Interim Supply

(b) an additional ten-twelfths of loans, investments and advances item L40 (schedule A) of the said main estimates, \$16,666,666.67;

(c) an additional four-twelfths of the total amounts of atomic energy item 5, energy, mines and resources item 10, and national research council, item 10 (schedule B) of the said main estimates, \$23,778,000;

(d) an additional three-twelfths of the total amounts of energy, mines and resources item 80 (schedule C) of the said main estimates, \$2,543,000;

(e) an additional two-twelfths of the total amounts of energy, mines and resources item 30, external affairs item 35, loans, investments and advances item L25 (schedule D) of the said main estimates, \$27,544,166.67;

(f) an additional one-twelfth of the total amounts of industry item 15, legislation item 20, national revenue item 5, solicitor general item 15, and trade and commerce item 29 (schedule E) of the said main estimates, \$13,735,550.

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending 31st March, 1968.

The Chairman: Shall the resolution carry?

Mr. Churchill: No, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Shall I report the resolution?

Mr. Churchill: No, Mr. Chairman.

• (10:20 p.m.)

Mr. Benson: I wish to say that the proportions requested in this bill are for one month's interim supply to last to April 30, 1967. In no instance is the full amount of an item being released by this bill. The form of the bill is the usual one for interim supply bills, and this goes for the resolution, as well. The passage of this resolution and the following bill will not prejudice the rights and privileges of hon. members to criticize any item of the estimates when it comes up in the committee of the whole house, and an undertaking is given that such rights and privileges will be respected and will not be curtailed or restricted in any way as a result of the passing of this measure.

Mr. Churchill: The only thing that saves the government from a prolonged debate on interim supply is the fact that we have been engaged in this lengthy session of the house for 231 days, which is an indication of serious bad management on the part of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Churchill: If there are any complaints, I will explain that statement.

The other fact is that the hour is late and the members of the cabinet want to have an Easter break. Out of compassion for them we do not propose prolonging the debate on interim supply. But we have a very serious complaint to offer, and I propose in just a few minutes to state that complaint, so that there may be no misunderstanding in future and no one on the government side will be able to say we raised no objection at this time. This is the first opportunity we have had to raise the objection, as the new estimates are before us.

On Tuesday, March 14, the hon. member for Edmonton West, the hon. member for Calgary North, myself and several other members of this house drew attention to irregularities in the defence estimates. On that occasion we raised a question of privilege and Mr. Speaker decided that because the estimates had not been referred to the house they were not before us for discussion, and that a question of privilege was not in order. But he did leave the door open to us to raise the matter on the appropriate occasion and the appropriate occasion is, of course, right now.

If the situation were different, the estimates would have to be withdrawn and rewritten as far as the Department of National Defence is concerned. I feel the greatest regret that this has not been done by the government. We pointed out the error to hon. gentlemen opposite, but they are so accustomed to taking up inflexible positions that we are continually placed in the position of having to plead with them to do what is right. It should be the other way round. They should be setting an example as the government of this country. But it is we who have to point out their errors and urge them to do what is proper and within the law.

They have broken the law by submitting the estimates for 1967-68 in their present form in connection with the Department of National Defence. They had no authority to present those estimates in the way they have done, contrary to the practice in the past. If the Treasury Board or the cabinet is to have the right to alter the wording of items in the estimates at their whim and pleasure, it becomes almost impossible for this house to do what it is duty bound to do, namely to examine the estimates with care, make comparisons with other years, and present a clear picture to the public showing how the money is being expended.