

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

have had the decency, after I told him about the letter I had received on January 31, to withdraw his charge that I was raising this matter now because of some political motive, on the basis of which I did not want to raise it on the night of January 30.

If he did not understand it before, let me say it to him now. Thursday night, apart from the fact that I was not too sure whether he might not yet do it the other way, at least I did not know that it had been done the other way across the years. I found that out yesterday when I received this document with this covering letter. I confirmed it last night and this morning by going through the statutes, *Hansard* and the old estimates in the library. And so we are in the position that on this day I had the first opportunity to raise this issue in parliament. I say to the minister that the attempt he made to answer me by talking about shallow arguments and his becoming involved in an argument with the Leader of the Opposition about the sincerity of hon. members and all that sort of thing was completely beside the point. Any attempt to raise the question as to whether or not the object of this expenditure is justifiable is likewise beside the point.

The issue is clear and simple. There has been a change of practice. The old practice across the years was always to bring before parliament estimates, supplementary in character, covering what had been spent by warrants. It can be found on page 31 of the statutes of 1926-27, covering the governor general's warrants of 1926, and I have other examples here for various years. That has been the practice all across the years. Along with that practice was the practice required by law of tabling the documents informing parliament.

The practice has been twofold: parliament has been informed and effective control by parliament has been maintained by parliament being given a chance to deal with the supplementary estimates. We now have a new dispensation, a new chapter, a new approach to the control of parliament—or to the lack of control by parliament—over expenditures. We now have this new line that when governor general's warrants are used all that will happen is that the letter of the law will be kept. Parliament will be informed, the sessional paper will be put on the table and sent down to room No. 167, and perhaps some hon. member such as the member for Winnipeg North Centre will find it, but there will not be given to parliament any opportunity to discuss in committee of supply the supplementary estimates related to those matters. I say to the minister, do not come back at us with the argument about the right to make motions respecting orders in council. That

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

machinery is valueless as far as the House of Commons is concerned. The most effective instrument we have is in committee of supply where, according to citations such as No. 478 and No. 479 of Beauchesne's third edition, every item has to be discussed separately as a separate grant. Here is the place where parliament has its traditional control over the executive and over the purse.

My hon. friend is doing with this practice what was done with the rule book a couple of years ago; it has been thrown into the river. "Oh, it is not too serious if it is only this one item of \$2 million," says my hon. friend, "because this is an item on which we are all agreed that something should have been done with respect to this project under the immigration branch of the department."

Mr. Fulton: I never said any such thing.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): But, Mr. Chairman, this comes at a significant time, and I did not pick this time; perhaps I predicted the election date with some accuracy but I could only predict it, I could not set it. The government chose to have this come out at this time when we have in prospect the spending of \$1,200 million by governor general's warrants. We now have a pattern on the basis of which parliament will not have a chance to approve of those expenditures. Mr. Chairman, it is as serious as my hon. friend the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Social Credit party and those of us in this group have tried to represent it at this time.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Chairman, might I ask the minister—and perhaps I should address this question to the Minister of Finance—whether he would join us in this party and the other parties in this house in an assurance that this procedure will not be followed in respect of governor general's warrants between now and the opening of the next parliament?

An hon. Member: You would ask a stupid question like that.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Chairman, the war of nerves about which we heard this morning has now given way on the part of the opposition to a sham battle.

The course that has been followed by the government with respect to the two items of expenditure under discussion, an expenditure authorized by governor general's warrants, has been regular, proper and constitutional in all respects.

May I just remind the committee of the situation and then I shall proceed to discuss the statutory authority for the course properly followed by the government. Due to im-providence and lack of foresight on the part