

*Supplementary Estimates*

members of this House, and it will be my duty to transmit to her and to her family the expressions of sympathy by the representatives of all parties in the House.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 1970-71

## REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEES

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 59. I move seconded by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury):

That, with the exception of the votes relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Supplementary Estimates (C), tabled in the House on March 4, 1971, be referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates;

And that the said votes relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, namely, votes 10c, 15c, 35c, 40c, 45c and 50c, be referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last when the President of the Privy Council asked leave to make a motion somewhat along these lines I indicated that I had two points of order which I wished to raise. Shortly thereafter I communicated to you, Sir, and to representatives of the other parties the content of my two points of order, and I am glad to say that one of them has been met.

That first point of order was to the effect that there had been a commitment that any supplementary estimates relating to veterans affairs would be referred not to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates but to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I appreciate the fact that the President of the Privy Council in redrafting this motion has kept that commitment, which takes care of that point of order. However, Sir, the other point of order still stands, and I raise it now as one that some of us regard as very serious.

My point has to do with the use of dollar items in the supplementary estimates for the purpose of legislating amendments to existing statutes. May I make it clear that this is not just a rehash of debates we have had over the years on the use of dollar items. The reason I say that is that recently we have changed our rules, and I submit that there is a new situation which makes the practice about which I am complaining an abuse of the rules and an abuse of the rights and privileges of Parliament.

If my counting is correct there are 21 dollar items in the Supplementary Estimates (C) which the present motion covers. Seventeen of these dollar items have the effect of changing the description attached to certain expenditures already approved, or of providing for a continuation into the new fiscal year of items, already approved, and so on. I do not complain about the use to which dollar items are being put in these 17 cases. There

[Mr. Speaker.]

are some that are a bit shady, but in the main these 17 cases are in line with what I regard as proper practice for the use of dollar items.

However, Sir, the other four items are items which are not estimates at all. They are not a case of the government asking Parliament to provide money. The use of a dollar item is just a device. The dollar is not needed; the dollar is not spent. The dollar is just a device, and in the four cases about which I am complaining this device is being used to amend four specific statutes.

The four statutes being amended are the Pension Act, the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, and the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act. I might indicate that the first two, the amendment to the Pension Act and the amendment to the Civilian War Pensions and Allowances Act, will be found in item 35c under Veterans Affairs, the amendment to the War Veterans Allowance Act will be found under 10c in Veterans Affairs, and the amendment to the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act will be found under item 7c of Finance. If Your Honour will check these items, as I am sure has been done since notice of this point of order was given on Thursday, you will agree that it is quite clear that in each of these four cases we are providing by the bill to be based on these estimates that the statute in question is being amended. I do not think I need read the items in order to make that point.

• (2:20 p.m.)

In the case of the items that come under Veterans Affairs, the amendments in all cases consist of altering certain schedules so that higher pensions or allowances will be paid. In the case of the item that comes under the Department of Finance there is an extension beyond the period of time specified in the statute at the present moment. In other words, Mr. Speaker, in each of these four cases, actual acts on the statute books of Parliament are being amended by this process.

A moment ago I said that in my view this is a new situation because of the rule changes that we made. May I point out, therefore, that when we did the massive overhaul of our rules two or three years ago we made significant changes in two areas, one relating to the legislative process with respect to bills and the other relating to estimates.

With respect to bills, we cut down the number of stages of debate to a maximum of three; there are now not more than three stages at which a bill bringing in an Act or amending an Act can be debated on the floor of Parliament. However, we retained that possibility of three stages; there are always two and sometimes there are three. In no case did we eliminate all such stages.

With respect to estimates, however, and knowing full well what we were doing, with our eyes wide open we took them off the floor of the House of Commons completely. We abolished the committee of supply; we provided for estimates to be referred, on a motion that is not debatable, to standing committees; we provided for the