

had in theory and in fact three days of debate in this House on Opposition days and that is it. We will never get to review those Supplementary Estimates again. I protest this outrage.

In order to demonstrate that I think it is an unfair procedure, I looked at what happened in 1980—not that 1980 is any precedent because, as I maintained before, the actions of the Government in this connection are totally unprecedented. These warrants have never been used before between sessions of Parliament as has been done in this case.

Without going into that issue again—although I stress that that outrage remains—in 1980 the Governor General issued certain warrants before Parliament was recalled following the election and after the defeat of the Government of the Right Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). The President of the Treasury Board at that time, Mr. Donald Johnston, prepared a little booklet explaining what had happened with all the Supplementary Estimates, the additional Supplementary Estimates and the Main Estimates and he tabled this booklet in the House of Commons. I have obtained a copy from the library. It is here. The Government of that day was forthcoming. It explained everything it had done and produced all the evidence to the House. In this case, sir, I submit the Government has not produced all this material and yet we are being asked today to rush through this Bill, in effect approving all these Supplementary Estimates.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, my request is that, first, if this is in order, and I question whether the whole procedure is, I would ask the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis) to agree today, before we come to this Bill, to undertake to introduce a motion to refer the statement on special Governor General's warrants to the appropriate committees of this House so that the committees can review what should have been Supplementary Estimates for the last financial year. We will then be able to see where the Government has transferred money from one vote to another, where it obtained additional approval by Governor General's warrant instead of presenting Estimates to this House in the usual way. We can then review all of this material because really we are not getting an opportunity to do so in light of the fact that this Bill has to be passed tonight under the Special Order that has been approved by the House.

Points of Order

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few brief comments and perhaps ask the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) and the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis) to respond. I rise in support of what my colleague from Kingston and the Islands (Mr. Milliken) has raised. As you will know, your Honour, both my colleague from Kingston and the Islands and myself have questioned before the procedure used by the Government to obtain these Governor General's warrants in the past.

Your Honour has decided that this was not a case of privilege. Of course, the Government should not interpret that to say that its use of these warrants was appropriate. We still maintain that they were not. However, my colleague has brought to the attention of the House the fact that there is at least a precedent which relates remotely to this case. The case prior was obviously not as severe as the one that is before us now. I choose the word "remotely" advisedly for that reason.

• (1510)

I submit that at the very least the Government should commit itself today to referring this particular item to the Government Operations Committee of the House of Commons. By reason of the fact that the issue belongs to Treasury Board, it is automatically one that can be raised by the Government Operations Committee. That committee, like other committees, can order its own business.

More specifically, if the Government House Leader were willing to indicate to the House that he is prepared to have this issue discussed fully by the Government Operations Committee, then perhaps we could have a compromise acceptable to all sides of the House. If this were done, then the committee could look at what was done in the previous case and make specific recommendations regarding the use and/or misuse of Governor General's warrants in the future.

I hope the Government House Leader feels that this is appropriate. I remind him that at one time in the past when his Party was in opposition this was an issue that was raised then, since it was felt to be important. I remind the Chair as well that we are indeed the only nation in the British Commonwealth of Nations that still has such an instrument as Governor General's warrants. Even in the Mother of Parliaments in Great Britain such an instrument does not exist. Even in cases in which the House is defeated by lack of confidence, Parliament resumes sitting briefly in order to grant supply to the Government for a reasonable period of time until such time as the House can be recalled after an election.