

Interim Supply

I think that interim supply is only a logical extension of the custom that existed in olden days when the peasant or man on the street had an opportunity of expressing his opinion freely and concisely without fear of reprisal on the part of the government when he paid his taxes in one form or another. I do not think it was ever the intention of parliamentary procedure that interim supply should be used to blackmail the government into deviating from its normal practice. I suggest this has been the reason why the opposition has seen fit to use 11 days of debate on interim supply to discuss the question of unification.

In effect what the opposition has said is quite simple. They have said: We will cease our filibuster, we will cease the prolongation of the debate on interim supply provided that you, the government, abdicate your rights and responsibilities as a government and deviate from the normal practice in bringing bills before the House of Commons.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the hon. member would differentiate between the official opposition and some of the other opposition parties on this particular issue?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

An hon. Member: I hope so.

Mr. Winkler: Mr. Chairman, through you I should like to inform the hon. member that this will be very desirable to us.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Chairman, since both hon. members are friends of mine I shall be glad to please both of them and assure them that I mean that the more irresponsible opposition party has used the interim supply debate to try to make the government deviate from the normal procedure in respect of bringing bills before this house.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): You have twisted it around.

Mr. Mackasey: I apologize to the hon. member, who is of course one of the more responsible members of this house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mackasey: This whole debate has changed today because the official opposition have realized that the prolongation of the debate on interim supply will not embarrass the government or harm the civil service by withholding their pay. Why should this make a difference in the debate if last Tuesday,

[Mr. Mackasey.]

Wednesday and Thursday it was imperative for the good of the country to force the sending of the unification bill to the standing committee before second reading? The principle is equally valid today. The difference, of course, is that they can no longer blackmail the government into doing what is morally wrong.

I suggest that parliamentary procedure in this country, which is based upon the British system, provides that it is the duty of the government to bring legislation forward and have the principle of that legislation discussed before it goes to committee for a more detailed examination of the principles and details of the bill. I think the hon. member for Carleton recognized that fact today. If the hon. member's private bill were adopted by the house, it would once and for all divorce from interim supply the question of the pay of the civil servants of Canada. I am aware of the respect the hon. member for Carleton has for tradition and parliamentary procedure—he has demonstrated it on many occasions—and I also know he would be the last one in this house to try to divorce the payroll of the civil service from interim supply if he thought that in some way it would weaken the position of the house.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member allow a question?

Mr. Mackasey: Yes. I saw the hon. member running down the aisle and more or less anticipated that he wanted to ask a question.

Mr. Churchill: I so enjoy the hon. member's remarks that I want to ask him this question. If the bill introduced by the hon. member for Carleton were accepted by the house, the government would be in no position to attempt to blackmail the opposition by the threat of not being able to pay the salaries of civil servants in the future.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Chairman, our enjoyment of each other's speeches is mutual. I enjoy the speeches of the hon. member as well. If the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre does not approve of the private bill of the hon. member for Carleton, I cannot help that, but I imagine that holding such a senior position in the house the hon. member for Carleton discussed with the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre the principles of his bill. Therefore I suggest that the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has a better opportunity of explaining the motives of the hon. member for Carleton than I have.