

has been abrogated and today we cannot challenge rulings made by the Speaker. But we can still question rulings of the Deputy Attorney General or, as in this case, the Acting Deputy Attorney General.

I would point out that commenting upon this statement by the Acting Deputy Attorney General causes me no embarrassment. I am not a lawyer and this gentleman is. I regret the fact that, his letter having been tabled in the House of Commons, it is possible for us to comment upon it without his being given the same opportunity to reply. I believe it would be better if these opinions were not tabled in the House of Commons; but we forced the issue in 1962, and this week we had to go through with what we were scrapping about in 1962, so this letter is now before us.

May I say that deputy attorneys general do not bother me in the slightest. I have had one in my family for over 20 years. They are fallible men, like you and I, Mr. Chairman. There is nothing infallible about deputy attorneys general, whether they be concerned with Canada as a whole or merely with one of the provinces. We do not have to accept the opinions of deputy attorneys general or acting deputy attorneys general without question, even if some people refer to them as though they were enunciating the law of the Medes and Persians and must never be questioned.

I should just like to refer to the first section of this letter which was written by Mr. D. Maxwell to Dr. Davidson, secretary of treasury board:

I refer to your discussion with Mr. Driedger today with respect to certain questions which you raised relating to the issue of mid-month salary cheques, and wish to confirm the opinions expressed to you by him.

That is, Mr. Driedger. As I say, the letter is written by Mr. D. Maxwell, Acting Deputy Attorney General. I continue:

I understand that your first question concerns the issue of cheques to persons employed in departments to which Parliament has granted full supply.

I have never heard of anyone questioning the authority to issue cheques to those employees of departments to which full supply had been granted by this parliament, but evidently someone thought it necessary to raise the question.

● (4:20 p.m.)

The view expressed to you was that, having regard to the Appropriation Act No. 6, 1966, wherein full supply was granted in respect of certain estimates items including the administration votes of a number of departments, there is no legal impediment to payment out of the votes

*Appropriation Act No. 8*

thereby approved to which salaries may be charged to employees in the departments concerned.

Nobody was questioning that. It is nice to know the deputy attorney general did not question the payment of the salaries to people in departments for which the full appropriation had been authorized.

But there is a very interesting last sentence in that second paragraph. It makes one wonder what is going on in the administration of the departments. Mr. Maxwell has as his last sentence:

This opinion, of course, assumes a sufficient balance in such votes to cover the payments.

Is Mr. Maxwell intimating that full supply having been granted to these departments all the money has been spent by the end of October and there may not be any money to pay for November, December, January, February and March? Maybe Mr. Maxwell knows more about the administration of these departments than members of parliament do. Some people will call that an impertinent thing for the acting deputy attorney general to write. "This opinion assumes a sufficient balance in such votes to cover the payments."

He is talking about eight months in the fiscal year for which full supply has been granted. Personally, I will not say it is impertinent. I will say it is pertinent to the question in view of what happened in the last few days in this house. My angle is that future events cast their shadows before.

We heard the Prime Minister make a statement in this house on Thursday—I was here; I had been in Toronto all week on a pair; I received a telephone call telling me it was likely closure would be introduced on Thursday and asking if I would come up to Ottawa. I thought: this is terrific; we are going to act like a government; we shall apply closure and get interim supply through. I phoned my pair. My pair was willing to come back. I got here at about ten minutes to six on Thursday after driving through the rain, and I heard the speeches made in this house. I was in the house, on and off, from six to eight, but continuously from eight until the house adjourned.

In discussing the unification measure the Prime Minister commented on demands by the opposition that the unification bill should be referred to a committee before second reading. He made the observation:

What is proposed here is a radical alteration of our normal parliamentary procedure. I, for one, would be quite willing to consider such a course. We need not worry about radical alteration to parliamentary procedure when necessary.