

*Business of Supply*

time the opposition would have an opportunity either to launch substantive motions or to have a discussion of the items in the supplementary estimates.

I must point out that it is very difficult for hon. members who are not on the committee to deal with this in detail unless the transcript of the proceedings is at hand. I only hope that in other situations which develop these proceedings will be made available.

Having said that, I should like to point out that since the motion which I have made deals with the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates I think I should put on the record the particular paragraphs of the fourth report of that committee which are referred to in the motion.

Paragraph 1 on page 2 reads as follows:

Your committee expresses its concern at the extensive use of \$1.00 items for the purpose of statutory amendments particularly in final supplementary estimates which are under time limit as to examination in the standing committee and for debate in the house. Appropriate legislative amendments should be made in all but the most exceptional and urgent cases.

The second paragraph reads:

Your committee also noted with concern an even greater use of \$1.00 items for the transfer of moneys from one account to another. In a number of cases an under-expended item served as a prolific source of funds for unrelated purposes in the same ministry.

These motions were proposed by my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert); and to show that this was approached in a non-partisan way, I am given to understand that they were seconded by the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson). They were passed in the committee and now form the subject for discussion by this house.

• (3:00 p.m.)

As I said, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friends will deal with specific charges related to definite items. I intend to make a general statement. Before doing so I would call attention to the fact that out of 29 pages of these supplementary estimates, dollar items appear on all but two, and a number of these pages have nothing on them but dollar items. This is the basis of supplementary estimates which, at first blush, are in terms of \$150 million but which, having regard to these dollar items, amount in fact to a much larger sum.

These dollar items are the target of our criticism. I shall direct it to two areas in

[Mr. Baldwin.]

particular. The first is the improper use of these items in lieu of legislation. The principle involved here is not something we have just dreamed up for the occasion of this particular motion. For a number of years I, together with other members of this party, have subjected the government to what we consider to be valid and well-deserved criticism for including in estimates, supplementary estimates and even in final supplementary estimates, one dollar items which have the effect of legislation.

When we legislate we go through a complex process in parliament. Measures are introduced and given first reading. A fairly wide-ranging debate is permitted on second reading. Bills are referred to a committee where members have opportunities to pursue discussion and propose amendments. There is a report stage during which the house considers carefully and in detail the value of the proposal and the advisability of spending money in the direction indicated. Amendments can be proposed as considered necessary. Then there is third reading. Here, in place of this reasonable and necessary process, we find that in the form of a few lines in a vote in supplementary estimates appears a dollar item which in effect constitutes an appropriation of money to be used in most cases as the government thinks fit, with complete freedom and discretion. This amounts to a travesty of parliamentary control over the executive and in particular of control by this house over expenditures of money by the executive.

I agree there is a case to be made occasionally for dollar items in urgent situations where such items might be needed to give the government the right to expend money at some future date for a purpose in respect of which a minister must come before the house and make an explanation in great detail. This is not the case in the present circumstances. We are talking now about final supplementary estimates in respect of the fiscal year which ends on March 31, only a matter of weeks from now. Obviously, every one of these dollar items deals with expenditures which have already been made by the government without regard to securing prior legislation authority, and which they are now trying to cover up.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Baldwin:** In order to avoid strong criticism from the Auditor General the government must obtain, by means of these dollar items, authority for expenditures which have