

Order Paper Questions

Legislating by means of dollar votes and altering the purpose of previous votes by a number of successive votes are practices with which the committee does not agree.

The actions of the government by using and abusing \$1 votes in this connection may be expeditious as far as it is concerned. It may be shrewd parliamentary tactic on the government's behalf. This route may be acceptable to them, but in terms of preserving the role and supremacy of parliament, I believe the principle is wrong.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to make a few remarks with respect to the point of order that has been raised by my colleague. I would like to make particular reference to vote 77(d) of Industry, Trade and Commerce being increased by the amount of \$2 billion.

In weighing whether this \$1 vote procedure is proper, we must do some degree take into account the magnitude of what would be passed tomorrow if this \$1 vote were to remain part of the Appropriation Act. It would be a \$2 billion extension of possible liability on the part of the government of Canada. We believe there is no authority to pass it in the form that is being proposed.

In committee we attempted to obtain evidence as to whether this procedure was in order. The vice-chairman of the committee stated, and I quote from page 24:29 of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs:

I think that may be a question more properly brought up in the House with the Speaker, on a point of order.

With that reference from the standing committee meeting, I would point out that considerable evidence was given to us by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce as to why they had proposed this \$1 item which would extend the eventual insurance guarantee limit of the EDC by \$2 billion. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has said they had been caught with only \$46 million of available guarantee money left, and they had no alternative. The important things to bear in mind are the comments of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to the committee? He showed very clearly that the government felt in all likelihood that it was out of order, and should not be proceeding in this way. As my hon. colleague from Vegreville has indicated, the government was pleading some type of emergency in order to get the legislative guarantee process through.

I would refer to page 24:14 of the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. As to why this \$1 item was included, the minister stated:

I agree, and I am not absolutely comfortable with it. I would have preferred to deal with this in the House of Commons, but I have to be a realist about those things when I look at the other papers and the speed by which those things are dealt with in the House of Commons.

In short, the exchange was simply that he was being pressed as to why he included it in the estimates that are before us. The minister, oddly enough, stated that he agreed that he would be more comfortable if it had been included or handled in the usual legislative way through the House of Commons. The minister at another point stated:

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

People have come and asked for the services of EDC and we have reached the limit. We either lose the business or change the limit. I am sorry to have to come this way;

That is, "I am sorry to have to come to the committee this way."

I would have preferred the other way. But I have no choice, and that is why I have taken the risk of coming before this committee.

Then he said:

I personally would love to have a better procedure, too.

Considering the magnitude of what is before us, it behooves this House not to pass a \$2 billion extension by reason of a \$1 item to amend the Appropriation Act. I hope it is found that this procedure is incorrect, and that it will be denied.

Mr. Goodale: Mr. Speaker, in considering this point of order we have heard, in general terms, three possible objections to the "\$1 items" which appear in the appropriations legislation. They have been referred to in general terms. To itemize them, I think members are registering complaints that the measures referred to are, in the first instance, legislative in nature; second, in the form that they have been presented they allege there is inadequate opportunity to discuss them at this stage in our proceedings; and third, in some way they allege they are foreign to the business of supply.

With respect to the first two points with respect to the legislative nature of the proposals and, second, the inadequacy of debate, those two points, even though they may be of concern to members must, from a procedural point of view, fall immediately—because if they were of real and substantial difficulty in relation to the so-called \$1 items which are before us they would surely be of more real and substantial difficulty in relation to those items which have a substantial amount of money attached to them.

In dealing with \$1 items, it is no valid to try to single them out and object to them in principle and, in particular, on the first two points which I have mentioned. Surely, those two points, if they were valid, would apply equally as well to other items, and perhaps even with more impact because those items have substantial amounts of money attached to them. In fact, members opposite are not making those two arguments in relation to all the items in the Appropriation Act. Therefore, I do not think those first two objections can stand.

It seems to me that the argument reduces itself, then, to consideration of whether the matters which have been complained about today are, in reality, part of the business of supply. It would be my submission to Your Honour that they are properly part of the business of supply. This matter, as has been mentioned, has occupied the attention of the House in the past. The practice complained of today by members opposite is by no means an innovation. The precedents are long-standing in support of the practice. The most substantial commentary about the point at issue was made by your predecessor, Mr. Speaker Lamoureux, in 1971 as reported in *Journals* at page 395. If one carefully considers what Mr. Speaker Lamoureux had to say on that occasion, one would see that he based his