

*Estimates*

munications, namely, \$240,000 down to \$61,000. Instead, however, Your Honour has put a motion which calls upon the House to vote yes or no on an item of \$16,324,000.

My point of order is that before you put the motion in the name of the President of the Treasury Board, Your Honour should be putting the notice of motion in the name of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni because under Standing Order 58 opposition motions on opposition days take precedence over government supply motions.

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

**Mr. Brewin:** Mr. Speaker, I merely wish to support very briefly the procedural argument put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I wish to base my argument less on the procedural aspect and more on the grounds of common sense.

**Mr. Bell:** What rule is that?

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair would like to hear the hon. member for Greenwood.

**Mr. Brewin:** I wish to base my argument on the premise that the rules of the House should make sense and should enable hon. members to perform one of their essential, historic functions which is to control the expenditure of the taxpayers dollar.

I wish to give an illustration. Item No. 29 in today's Routine Proceedings gives notice of opposition to voting more than \$30 million on the NORAD defence system, an active defence system which has been obsolete for ten years.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. With respect, I have to caution hon. members that they should stay strictly within the bounds of the procedural question we have before us.

**Mr. Brewin:** If Your Honour would permit me to finish my sentence you would see its relevance to the procedural point. I would say that the amount saved to the exchequer would be \$120 million, but presumably we are being restricted to voting only on the motion of the President of the Treasury Board that the whole of vote five for National Defence, amounting to \$1,448 million, the total operating expenditure on our armed forces, be approved. If the ruling is against what has been urged by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre I, and other hon. members of the House, will be deprived of our right to object to an expenditure which is unnecessary or wasteful; we will not be allowed to strike out a clearly wasteful expenditure without voting to strike out the whole of a large item comprising vast expenditures upon the armed forces.

I urge upon you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a basic rule when interpreting any procedural or legal provision, that is, it should be interpreted so as to make sense, not nonsense.

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

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, as everyone who has ever participated in any assembly or had anything to do with the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre.)]

law knows, procedural points, procedural provisions, or procedural arguments, always attach themselves to very important substantive considerations. We are not raising these procedural arguments merely for the sake of doing so. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has not raised this point merely to make a speech, to give hon. members opposite an opportunity to chatter while the discussion goes on. We raise this procedural argument because in our view the provisions which now govern the work of the House of Commons in connection with estimates make a mockery of members of this House.

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

**Mr. Lewis:** They make the applications of the rules meaningless as far as our ancient role of exerting surveillance over government expenditure is concerned. It is, in my opinion, totally absurd that hon. members should be prohibited from voting against an expenditure which they consider to be wrong and wasteful, and to be placed in the position of voting against a total item which includes expenditures they may very well support. But this is what the rule brings us to do. This is why the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre raised this procedural argument. He appeals to you, as I do, that you apply subsection eight of rule 58 which clearly states that opposition motions shall take precedence over all government supply motions on allotted days. Our motions of opposition have precedence. The members of this House have a right as well as a duty to vote against what they consider to be wasteful expenditure without being placed in the position of opposing an entire item which contains expenditures they support.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, members of the House and everyone else, that if your ruling should place us in the untenable position, in the ridiculous position, in the unfair position of having to vote against an entire item because we do not possess the rights we should possess to vote against a portion of an item to which we are opposed, then we shall have no alternative but to vote against the entire item, and to keep voting against item after item after item unless there is some common sense in the rules as applied to us.

• (2210)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair has to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in respect of which the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) and the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) have submitted argument. I might deal first with the argument of the hon. member for York South who has just resumed his seat. I think hon. members will acknowledge that the Chair has the responsibility of carrying out the Standing Orders, the precedents and decisions which are binding upon the Chair. The hon. member for York South has argued very well, but with respect I think he has not argued about the responsibilities of the Chair. He has really been arguing that if the Chair rules against him he will have to take certain other action. Of course, under the Standing Orders, that is his right. I do not wish to comment upon whether the Standing Orders and practices are fair and just. My comment is that the Chair must be guided by the