

Interim Supply

year ending March 31, 1958, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; and in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$7,298,566.67, being one-third of the total of the amounts of items 52, 57, 116, 117, 131, 132, 156, 248, 281, 322, 324, 328, 355, 399 and 460 of the said estimates; a sum not exceeding \$697,069.25, being one-quarter of the total of the amounts of items 153, 158, 252 and 397 of the said estimates; a sum not exceeding \$3,640,012.17, being one-sixth of the total of the amounts of items 16, 71, 134, 217, 218, 219, 227, 361, 364, 391, 422, 428 and 432 of the said estimates; and a sum not exceeding \$2,383,999.92, being one-twelfth of the total of the amounts of items 28, 69, 129, 221, 223, 224, 233, 234, 300, 321, 333, 424, 425, 430 and 503 of the said estimates;

in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$9,635,679.50, being one-half of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1958 laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; a sum not exceeding \$16,166.67, being one-third of the total of the amounts of items 626 and 654 of the said estimates; and a sum not exceeding \$208,333.34, being one-sixth of the total of the amounts of items 621 and 640 of the said estimates;

and in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$7,000,000, being two-sevenths of the total of the amount of item 663 set forth in the further supplementary estimates (1) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1958 laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; a sum not exceeding \$30,555,555.56, being four-ninths of the total of the amounts of items 664, 665, 666, 667, 669 and 670 of the said estimates; and a sum of \$1,000,000, being two-thirds of the total of the amount of item 668 of the said estimates,

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1958.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, I rise for the purpose of discussing in general the unusual course of bringing before parliament in the last two days of a session a supply motion covering so many hundreds of millions of dollars, without any possibility of examination or critical consideration being given to such fabulous amounts which, indeed, represent as much as Canada expended in a whole year before the war.

As I look back over the records of parliament when parliament was discharging its responsibility and maintaining its prestige, when estimates were carefully examined and critically condemned if improperly included among those presented, and compare that situation with the situation today, I can only say that this method of placing so many hundreds of millions of dollars of expenditure before parliament is a further insult and humiliation to this institution and to its prestige.

Indeed, I say this. It is a contempt of parliament to deny consideration except as provided in this general manner. We in the opposition have been willing throughout to co-operate. We have done our part this session to facilitate the passage of necessary legislation, to permit an election to take place in the month of June.

There are several matters included in the supplementary estimates, and I shall refer to them to begin with. They include increases in the family allowance, in old age security payments, in old age assistance, in aid to blind persons, in aid to the disabled, in veterans disability pensions and in the war veterans allowance. We favour the increases. We say that, generally speaking, Canadians realize that these increases are totally inadequate to meet the situation created by the failure of the government to take effective action to meet the tremendous inflationary gallop that is taking place in this country.

Indeed, the government is its own major contributor to inflation in this country. It has failed to take any action to reduce unnecessary and wasteful expenditures. These estimates this year exceed anything in the history of this country. Our effort to make a contribution by recommending the reduction of unnecessary expenditures has on every occasion been waved aside, when we have endeavoured to secure the setting up of a commission similar to the Hoover commission in the United States to make a careful, critical and complete examination of expenditures to the end that unnecessary ones shall be eliminated.

There is no adequate opportunity for discussion here. These pension increases deserve an opportunity for full discussion. They should have been placed before committees of the house in order to enable representatives of the people to attend here, give evidence and express their views with regard to the inadequacy of the increases. I say that the attitude taken by the government is a cynical disregard of the parliamentary function of careful and meticulous examination. We succeeded in having a committee set up to consider the estimates. I need not say anything as to the extent to which it has functioned this session. Indeed, there was no opportunity for an effective estimates committee to function unless that committee had the power to call witnesses and to secure the production of documents.

The expenditures today, even in this interim supply motion, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars might as well be passed without any discussion unless that discussion would draw the attention of the Canadian people to some of these overexpenditures. For after all, whatever stand we may take and whatever desire we may have to examine the expenditures carefully, we have been denied that opportunity at this session to a degree that has not taken place in years.

In other words parliament more and more is simply becoming an instrument for the