

Supplementary Estimates (A)

couple that are not performing properly or where there is some injustice. For example, in the Department of Transport there might be some jiggery-pokery going on there.

I remember when a CFLCO airplane crashed in 1977 in Labrador. It was just shocking. The Department of Transport interfered with the report of the accident investigation division. I smoked it out. Now a royal commission is sitting and getting the evidence on all this.

This procedure would be a very useful device for something of that kind. If the Minister of Transport had not been forthcoming on a matter like that, fine, we would choose his estimates to go into in the House until he came forward with the information. Who knows what department or minister it will be, but it will make them all sit up and be a bit more attentive to the wishes of their own backbenchers and the opposition.

We have an experienced former minister in the Treasury benches. He was always pretty forthcoming. He would have been even more forthcoming and on his toes if he knew that he could be kept in this House for a few days answering questions in Committee of the Whole.

That is what this amendment suggests. It is not something we were not prepared to do ourselves. We are suggesting a way out for the President of the Privy Council. The only difference between his motion and ours is that there are four days in this House when we discuss interim supply and supplementary estimates, and three days in Committee of the Whole where we can really probe the minister and so can backbenchers opposite. There is nothing stopping them in Committee of the Whole asking any questions they want to ask.

For the main estimates we are suggesting this different treatment. We believe that this will make a vast difference in committee, because when a minister comes to the committee he will be more willing to be reasonable. He is not going to want the opposition to choose his department to be grilled in the House of Commons. He will be more forthcoming. It will make the system more reasonable all around.

Part of the frustration now is that you cannot do anything when the government gives you the run around. We were over there ourselves. We would want to give the run around too. Nobody wants to create a whip for his own back. It is only because we were new at the game and in government for only a few months that we were willing to propose this as a government. If we had been in power for sixteen years, we would be just as bad as the hon. gentleman opposite, most likely. I would have liked to be given a test of the sixteen years first and then see if we can make a comparison, but that was not to be.

These are our suggestions. We are hoping that the President of the Privy Council will accept this amendment, or if he does not want to accept it as it is, he might talk to our House leader and see if there is some common ground.

In concluding—I have a lot more information that is very relevant but I do not want to occupy the time of the House too much; I know we have a lot of other speakers who wish to

address themselves to this very question—quite seriously, I say we on this side of the House want to co-operate.

● (1730)

I, as a former minister of finance, will be quite frank. I am interested in seeing a lot of that legislation through—tax conventions and banking legislation, Bretton Woods. There is a lot of legislation that is non-controversial which should be able to go through this House reasonably quickly, as long as hon. members on this side of the House are included in the process and as long as we are treated with some degree of fairness.

There are four or five years to go, and I for one do not think that much that is said this year is going to have any effect when the next election comes in four or five years' time. I am interested in trying to see that this is a place that does a good job and that the things we really disagree on we ventilate well, but otherwise let us get on with the business. However, we are only going to be in that frame of mind if hon. gentlemen will give some way to us, and in the last ten days this they have not done. They were rubbing our noses in it with their approach to the financial statement last Monday night, and they were doing it again in the estimates on Tuesday. Well, it is all well and good, but it does not induce the right kind of spirit.

Now, if we can be given some proper way with backbenchers opposite to go at the estimates, where we know at the end of the process we have some muscle to use on recalcitrant ministers, or on those who get carried away with the sense of their own importance, or on those who have something to hide, then it will make the whole process a lot better, save a lot of time in committee, and it will make a lot healthier atmosphere, so I am hoping.

I certainly have nothing to praise the government for at the moment. In my next speech I would like to be able to get up and praise the government for doing something, and for doing something sensible. I have not been able to do that, but I commend this to the President of the Privy Council and hope that he will respond and that we can get on and do a lot of business before the end of July, close for a week or two, come back in the middle of August full of vim and vigour, get right into this thing again and get on with the business.

So, I have great pleasure in moving, seconded by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton the motion Your Honour now has, and I hope we will get a good response from the other side.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Before I can put that amendment to the House I want to express some concern about the provisions in the last paragraph where the amendment proposes that if this amendment were to be adopted by the House, if I understand it correctly, it would be exempt from any deadline in this or any other temporary or Standing Order or permanent Standing Order related to the business of supply, and so forth. My understanding is that the amendment