

Supply—Agriculture

that would actually be spent in the long run. There are a number of items of this character in these further supplementary estimates, No. 5, 1960-61 now before us. I get the impression that this is perhaps an extension of the practice which has been criticized by private members in the past.

I note that there are four of these one dollar items in the estimates of the Department of Finance. Perhaps when the minister is dealing with those estimates he would give careful consideration to making a statement as to whether or not this is an enlargement of the practice which has been criticized in the past. Perhaps after the dinner recess the minister would be prepared to give some explanation of this matter such as I have requested, and tell us whether or not this indicates a maintenance of the practice or an extension of it. This seems to be a fairly loose method of getting parliamentary approval without members of parliament actually knowing the details of the ultimate expenditure.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Each case stands on its own feet. This is a situation in which there is sufficient money in the item to meet this particular expenditure proposed, but the terms used in the item as they appear in the Appropriation Act are not broad enough to include authority to make this payment. We are coming back to parliament, therefore, not to ask for more money but to ask, in effect, for an extension of the scope of the item. A one dollar item is the appropriate and accepted legislative vehicle for this purpose.

In so far as information is concerned, if the hon. member will look at the details on page 14 of this pamphlet copy of the further supplementary estimates we are now studying, he will see that the item appears as follows:

Grant towards ninth international botanical congress, \$10,000.

Less—amount available from savings in the main estimates, 1960-61, \$9,999.

This leaves the balance of \$1 to be voted.

Mr. Benidickson: With all the respect in the world for the efficiency of those who look after government accounts, I just cannot believe they can be so accurate as to estimate within one dollar—

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has missed the point—

Mr. Benidickson: Would the minister please hear me out. I just cannot believe they can be so accurate in estimating that within one dollar there will be a saving of \$9,999 or, shall we say, a lapsing or shortfall in the main estimates of \$9,999 and that this can be

put alongside a necessary new item of expenditure of \$10,000 for the ninth international botanical congress.

The point I raise is that we always have lapses. I have paid my respects to the estimators in our departments, but they cannot always be accurate. If they put a suggestion in the estimates a year ahead that a certain appropriation is required for certain reasons, expenditures under one heading may prove to be either not required or plans may have not advanced sufficiently to entail spending that amount of money within the fiscal year of budgeting. In consequence, such an item would normally lapse.

I raise the question of whether we should enlarge the procedure of introducing a dollar item in the summary of our supplementary estimate requirements, where there is no requirement for the non-observant person to go to the details and perhaps find something that may be quite contrary to that which is related to the lapsing.

We have here a lapsing of \$9,999. This amount is apparently not likely to be spent under the main estimates. I am not criticizing the Minister of Finance particularly in this matter, but why does not the Minister of Agriculture direct that the reason is recited in bold, clear detail under the item "Branch Administration"? Why should it not be set out in this item that we require \$10,000 for the ninth international botanical congress? Would that not be possible?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, that is precisely what the item does. If the hon. gentleman will look at item 658 he will see that its purpose is described in these terms:

To extend the purposes of vote 5 of the main estimates, 1960-61 to include a grant of \$10,000 to assist in defraying the costs of the ninth international botanical congress.

I ask, Mr. Chairman, what could be clearer than that? Parliament is told that this is the whole purpose of the item. We cannot bring in provisions in supplementary estimates unless there is some amount set forth. Hon. members will know we have never yet had an item in the estimates that did not show some amount. The accepted practice is, and has been for a long time, that where the purpose of the item is not to seek a grant of money, but to bring about legislative enlargement of the purpose for which parliament previously voted the money, the one dollar item is the method used.

What is the alternative? The alternative would be that we bring forward an entirely new item of \$10,000. If we detached it altogether from existing items in the Appropriation Act and brought forward another item such as the item of \$10,000 for expenditures in connection with the ninth international