

Veterans Affairs

Mr. Cossitt: It has been my contention since the beginning that decentralization and moving these institutions out of Ottawa makes sense sometimes but does not make sense at other times. This was one of the times it definitely did not. It was a case where it appeared as if the government of the day was moving a very important cog in government machinery to a riding it was afraid it would lose in a subsequent election. It was moved there to prop up the cause of the Liberal Party. That was a pretty poor reason, when the government had facilities in Ottawa which were not inadequate, or could have been enlarged if they were slightly inadequate, at much less expense than taking a whole institution down to the province of Prince Edward Island.

● (1710)

Of course, the biggest problem was created for the veterans of Canada, who found that the service they were receiving from the Department of Veterans Affairs would be cut down because in effect they would be communicating with the extreme end of the country rather than the centre. Through all its branches in Canada and through its national executive, the Canadian Legion strongly opposed this move, but the government failed to listen in any way to the representations of the Canadian Legion on this matter. Also the government failed to listen to the representations of the opposition and went ahead on the basis of a straight political consideration.

Political consideration and taxpayers' funds should not be equated together. Unfortunately there has been too much of a history in the country, particularly with some administrations, of equating the two together, of using public funds to further political considerations. In my opinion, the move of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the maritimes was a straight case of political consideration, rather than service to the veterans or proper expenditure of money by the government on behalf of the taxpayers of Canada.

I presume the matter stands now as a *fait accompli*; it has got to the point of no return. There is no way this matter can actually be stopped without a great deal more expense to the Canadian government and to the taxpayers of Canada.

Mr. Collenette: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) but I would ask his indulgence for a minute before he closes off the debate on this notice of motion.

The normal courtesy in private members' hour and business in the House requires the co-operation of all parties. It is usual to ask each member whether he or she wishes to proceed with a private member's bill or notice of motion for the production of papers. We had already asked the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville and other members if they wished to proceed today and we had not got agreement. As Mr. Speaker will note, the order for today's discussion should have been order No. 32 in the name of my colleague, the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert). I draw Mr. Speaker's attention to the fact that we have a terrible breach of courtesy here this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Leeds-Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, I find what the parliamentary secretary just said confusing. Perhaps I should ask him to elaborate. Nobody consulted me as to whether this motion should be or should not be heard today. When I came into the House, I suddenly found that it was there. I am just wondering what the parliamentary secretary is getting at. He has left the chamber, but I am sure someone will inform him of what I say.

Many weeks ago I received a telephone call from someone whose name I do not even recall but who claimed to be a member of the Privy Council office; he was wondering if I wanted to proceed at that time. At that time the minister had just died, so I said that it would be rather untimely to proceed the week after the minister was buried, that it would be taken as being offensive. I did not want to proceed at that time for that reason, obviously it would be most inappropriate.

I did not know that it was on the Order Paper today. Perhaps it is my fault for not looking at that section of the Order Paper until about five minutes before I was called upon to speak. I was prepared to go ahead, even though I must say that much of the material I would use is in my office. I did not receive the courtesy of notification from the government that it was its intention to call this motion today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary does not have a point of order. The Chair has observed the rules; the item is on the Order Paper. Any arrangements made individually by members outside of the House are not recorded in decisions of the House. They are private matters; they do not concern the Chair.

Mr. Collenette: Mr. Speaker can rule as to whether or not this was a point of order but, as I said, it requires a certain amount of co-operation for private members' business to operate in this place. As we have just seen from the hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker), we usually co-operate in a very fair and equitable manner.

I have been informed that the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville notified the government—and we have to organize these debates—of his intention to withdraw this motion from the Order Paper. He did not do so, but I would like that on the record because he has gone back on his word.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is not a point of order.

Mr. Cossitt: I ask the parliamentary secretary to withdraw his remark that I have gone back on my word. In other words, he is calling me a liar. I consider that unparliamentary, and I am not prepared to accept it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has listened carefully to the language used. There are certain expressions which are unparliamentary, such as the one to which the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville referred. But with all due respect