

Interim Supply

to discuss supply and the granting of a supply to Her Majesty. This is what we are doing—

Mr. Pugh: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order—

Mr. Argue: I am speaking on a point of order and there cannot be two points of order at the same time.

The Chairman: Order. I am hearing the hon. member for Assiniboia on the point of order, and I will hear the hon. member afterwards if he has a point of order.

Mr. Argue: I was saying, Mr. Chairman, that this was probably the best established right of the House of Commons in its parliamentary tradition, namely the right to debate and consider the question of granting a supply to Her Majesty. I would think it would be a very sad day in our democratic society when any move was made to curtail the breadth of discussion and the application of this fundamental democratic ruling.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the statement you yourself have made, I suggest that in the absence of rules that is the very best argument there is and that in this case there cannot be any ruling made by Your Honour which would restrict debate.

You have brought forward two propositions, two rules, which should apply in this debate, and with those rules I agree, namely that speeches should be relevant. They should be relevant to one sixth of the items raised in the estimates. The sum of \$600 million is the item which is dealing with countless subjects in the estimates, and therefore to be relevant one must only relate one's remarks to a sum of money and an item for which the government is asking parliament for its approval.

Mr. Chairman, you have said that there should be no repetition of debate. That is a correct and a proper ruling, but that certainly does not mean that once parliament has had a debate on a given subject in a given session, it can no longer debate that subject. In my opinion, that is not what that rule means at all. It means that a member cannot repeat the words of a previous debate, that he cannot quote from previous debates, and that he certainly is not allowed to repeat at this time a speech that he has made on a former occasion. The fact that we have had one discussion on the question of unemployment, which arose because of a unanimous consent of the house to broaden the discussion of this particular item, I suggest does not make any statement today on the question of unemployment when discussing these new estimates fall within the rule that there cannot be repetition in debate. If the hon. member for Essex East proceeded at this time to pick

[Mr. Argue.]

up a manuscript of a speech that he had already made in this session, it would be a case of repetition and Your Honour would very properly rule him out of order. But to say that one-sixth of the item for the winter works program makes it impossible for us to discuss winter works is certainly, I suggest, a travesty of the rules which could not be tolerated.

Mr. Pugh: Mr. Chairman, the point I tried to raise before was that you have already given a ruling from the Chair.

Mr. Argue: No.

Mr. Pugh: May I ask if a ruling has been made from the Chair?

The Chairman: I think it is obvious that the Chair had made a ruling, but I gave permission to the hon. member for Assiniboia to discuss the point further if he so wished, and that was done.

I would just like to say that when I referred to repetition I was not referring to the rule of repetition on the part of one hon. member. But to me the standing orders are so drafted that the house will be able in its normal time to go over all the problems of the administration, and therefore to be able to do that we may not, as a general rule, repeat the same debate. As I have said, there will be several occasions on which to discuss this same problem, but we should not multiply them indefinitely. As I said, I do not think that my ruling deprives the hon. member of any right, because there would be other occasions on which to discuss the matter. We have had occasions previously and we will have in the future.

I say that on this question there may be general reference to the administration. That is how I understand the rule relating to relevancy. It should not be considered in a subjective way. Hon. members should not think that because they feel that it is the best occasion, in their view, to discuss certain problems, that this is the time when they should discuss them, and that if the Chair prevents them from doing so, that their rights are endangered. Therefore I rule that references generally to the administration are in order to decide whether the committee should vote these interim supplies or not; but I do not think that I could consider in order any discussion of one problem in particular. That is my ruling.

Mr. Winch: May I ask, Mr. Chairman, whether you would enlarge a little on that? I am just seeking clarification. Are you, in your ruling, also admitting that since this is an interim supply motion anything which deals with policy, and all subjects covered