

Supply—Veterans Affairs

statement. The house sat at three o'clock and the discussion of the estimates began somewhat later. In order that the cheques which had not already been sent out might go out on Friday by the close of business on the basis of what was done in the house that day, the supplementary estimates of over \$200 million would have had to be passed at machine-gun speed, with virtually no consideration of any kind, as well as the supplementary legislation.

I leave it to the members of this house—

Mr. Abbott: Will the hon. member allow me to interrupt? He quoted me quite correctly, and I said that the cheques would normally have gone out on Friday. It was quite obvious that they could not have gone out on Friday, but had we been able to complete the estimates they would have gone out one day late, the following morning.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I am only quoting the minister's words. I thought probably he had meant Monday.

Mr. Abbott: I said, would normally have gone out today.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): He said "today" and I am only quoting what he said. The minister was probably tense when he made that statement.

Mr. Abbott: It was strictly accurate. No one ever pretended they would go out Friday if we only started to consider the estimates on Friday. In addition, the hon. member is completely out of order.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I shall continue if the hon. members will allow me.

Mr. Howe: Has the hon. member some special dispensation? I ask you, Mr. Chairman, what item is being discussed?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I sometimes find, when I defer to hon. gentlemen opposite, that they are making the speeches and not I. I certainly do not propose to yield now.

Mr. Abbott: What item is the hon. member discussing?

The Chairman: May I draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that we are considering item 649.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I see the minister smile, and I am not surprised at this point being raised. I suggest that we are here today by unanimous consent. I suggest that it would be a strange thing if this statement, which does affect the privileges of members of this house, could not be made. If that is not the view of the house, led by the government—well, of course we are often reminded that there is a majority here. I

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

believe, however, that there will be enough sense of fair play in this house to let me finish. I shall not be long.

Let me say in passing that so far as I can discover—

Mr. Sinnott: On a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, written speeches cannot be delivered in committee.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I am very thankful for the help which the member for Springfield is giving me.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Let me say in passing that, so far as I can discover, the number of civil servants who did not receive their cheques is very small; indeed I hope it is microscopically small. I repeat that the minister's clear implication was that we, on Friday evening, were to act as nothing but a rubber stamp. I doubt if the people of Canada wish their affairs dealt with in that way.

Mr. Abbott: On a question of privilege, all I asked the house to do was to sit after eleven o'clock. I noticed the other day that the House of Commons at Westminster sat for twenty-three hours, and I only asked that the committee sit after eleven o'clock. I agreed at once when it was suggested that we should not do so.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I read the minister's words—

Mr. Abbott: I thought we might work a little longer.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I again refer to the minister's words, and what he was really saying was a threat—

Mr. Abbott: There was no threat at all. I acquiesced in the suggestion made by the leader of the opposition.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): That was after the minister had made this subtle little thrust directly to the civil service. As I say, I hope there was a small number of civil servants involved. I want to go back to what he really meant, that unless we were prepared to rush through the rest of the estimates, including the foot-and-mouth disease item—

Mr. Sinnott: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Have I got to submit to this sort of thing? Who is the chairman here?

The Chairman: I am the chairman, and the hon. member for Springfield has the floor on a question of privilege.