

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

CONSIDERATION OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B) 1968-69—MOTION RESPECTING ONE-DOLLAR ITEMS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In accordance with paragraph (4) of standing order 58 when two or more opposition motions are set down for consideration under the order Business of Supply, it is the duty of the Chair to decide which motion shall have precedence at this sitting. The two opposition motions set down for consideration at this sitting are almost identical, as hon. members will note on looking at today's order paper. Therefore in connection with this aspect of the matter, the task of the Chair is somewhat eased.

After the first of these motions has been debated, I have some doubts as to whether the second motion should be proceeded with, as this procedure would then be inconsistent with the usual practice of the house, and it might be difficult to proceed with the debate of the second motion when we have completed the debate of the first one. I therefore suggest that preference at this particular sitting should be given to the motion proposed by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence merely to say that I agree with the choice you have made between the two motions, since they are more or less the same. I also agree with Your Honour that if we have a debate on the first one it will be unnecessary to have a debate on the second one, which stands in my name.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Perhaps it might be helpful if I could refer to discussions which have taken place. I understand there is a general disposition to commence the discussion with the question of the one dollar items, and that after that subject matter has been dealt with adequately it is the proposal of hon. members opposite that we should proceed to the details of the estimates. My understanding is that their preference is to deal with the item in regard to housing first, and with the item on manpower and immigration second. I should like to indicate that I and my colleagues would be agreeable to that course of proceeding, and I would like to take this opportunity to make these discussions generally known to the house.

Business of Supply

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I also have a moment to concur in what the government house leader has said. I would just like to say that it was also agreed that the appropriate ministers would be here when we deal with their items.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River) moved:

That this house concurs with the views expressed by the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates relating to the use of \$1.00 items in estimates as set out in paragraphs one and two of the fourth report of the said committee on February 28, 1969.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I launch into a discussion of the subject matter of this motion I think I will be pardoned for referring to the matter which was brought up by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) with regard to ministerial attendance. I would be quite out of order if at this stage I were to comment on the fact that during the course of the question period fewer than half of the ministers of the Crown were present. Nevertheless I am in order when I say that on a motion which affects the government as a whole—not necessarily any one minister, but a government practice which forms the basis of my motion, and one to which we object strenuously—one would have thought that a large number of ministers would be here, not necessarily to hear what I and other members may have to say but to hear also the criticisms which have been and will be voiced, not only by members on this side of the house but also by members on the other side. Apparently however, in so far as this matter is concerned they have slipped their leash, and I therefore voice a very serious criticism of a bad practice on the part of this government.

I also want to say at once that I will not go into much detail on the particular items in question. In the first instance I was not a member of the committee, and in the second it is only a few minutes ago that the transcript of the proceedings of the last meeting of the committee have been made available to members of the house who are concerned about this matter, and who may wish to participate in the debate. I am not placing any blame upon the functionaries who are involved, but we on this side did agree to an order to facilitate proceedings whereby the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates would entertain a discussion of the final supplementary estimates. Then, it was agreed that today, tomorrow and Wednesday would be days upon which at the appropriate