

*Procedure on Estimates*

**Mr. MacEachen:** We may look dumb over here—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** —but we are really not that dumb that we are going to co-operate with the hon. member for Peace River in his funny tricks in committee of the whole. We are ready to deal with the motions—

**Mr. Baldwin:** You are frightened of votes.

**Mr. MacEachen:** —that are on the order paper, put there not by members of the government but by members opposite. The hon. member for the Yukon is the official spokesman for the official opposition on matters relating to the financial estimates, so it is too bad that by this stratagem they have put themselves in this position. Maybe next year they will avoid that problem.

**Mr. Paproski:** Filibuster!

**Mr. MacEachen:** The hon. member for Peace River has said that we are afraid of votes.

**Mr. Baldwin:** You are.

**Mr. MacEachen:** We have had a lot of votes since the beginning of the year and we have come through them one way or another.

**An hon. Member:** Yes, one way.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Probably we will have quite a number of votes today, but it is really a bit irresponsible for the hon. member for Peace River to come into the House and say "Let's do these major votes now—let's call the vote at four o'clock or 3.30 on seven items in the estimates". Some of these would clearly involve confidence if carried. There is no question about it.

● (1600)

**Mr. Baldwin:** Ah, now it comes out.

**Mr. MacEachen:** We should not say, "Let us do that", without having given any notice to the members of the House of Commons, most of whom went away on the weekend expecting that the official vote will take place at a quarter to ten tonight. Hon. members have been party to arrangements for taking votes at a certain time, so that hon. members will know well in advance when votes are to be held.

Speaking personally, if it were possible for hon. members to be given proper notice, it would not bother me much if we were to call these votes at the moment the debate has concluded. It seems to me, if the hon. member for Peace River had been serious about this proposal, he would have used the normal channels of consultation that exist in order to discuss this in a way that might have led to some sort of arrangement. However, to ask us without notice, to make an arrangement of this magnitude for the calling of a vote early this afternoon merely to ease the course for him to deny supply, is just a bit too much. I take it for granted that the hon. member for Peace River was not serious in making his proposal along those lines.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

I, myself, am not entirely satisfied with supply procedures. I have made that clear before. Perhaps I should mention, however, specially for the benefit of new members of the House, that those supply procedures, bad or good as they may be, were adopted unanimously by the members of the House and every party supported those supply procedures. There are flaws in them; yet, surely, this is not the time to ask us to change the Standing Orders affecting this major part of our work to do with supply in order to accommodate a particular need at the moment. I suggest we ought to follow the procedures which have been established. If we come to those motions for concurrence, I would oppose very vigorously the suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that it would be possible to make moves to reduce those amounts that are in the motions for concurrence. If that is attempted, I will argue the case. I am really, regrettably, telling the hon. member for Peace River and his colleagues that we are ready to follow procedures that they have laid before us, and we cannot co-operate with them in removing the obstacles which they have themselves placed in their own way.

**Mr. Baldwin:** So, you are prepared to filibuster so that there cannot be any vote. It is as simple as that.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I never thought I would see the day when the leader of the House, a member of the government, would rise in his place and, in effect, tell the House that the primary purpose or function of the House is to be frustrated by the position he spelled out today. I am really, really disappointed. The primary function of this House surely is that of controlling the expenditure of public funds and the position he has taken today will completely frustrate that process. He cannot say to us in this House that he foresaw the procedural difficulties with which we are confronted today at the time these rules changes came about. When he says that members of the House supported unanimously the changes relating to supply, it ill behooves him, in making his excuses to us, to cry his huge crocodile tears and tell us that he wishes there were a way around the difficulty. He did not go quite that far. Obviously, it is the will of the members of the opposition that there be found some way around the difficulties with which we are confronted.

What does the argument put forward by the minister amount to? Hon. members opposite, in effect, are afraid to vote on the items concerning which notice of opposition has been given. They are afraid to vote because they know very well that the opposition is likely to be united on one or more of those items. It is interesting to note, too, that he admitted without reservation that some of those items clearly involve confidence. That is the first time such an admission has been made. What is the result of the position the government is taking? Although it is the primary function of Parliament to debate estimates, to examine them and to vote upon them, the government, because it is afraid of the result of the vote, is subverting the very purpose of Parliament for its own political ends. That is what this means, nothing more or less.

The minister suggested that if we had desisted from placing certain motions on the order paper we could have dealt with the matter when the bill is considered. That is absolutely incorrect. Even if it were not so, the minister,