

subject of disagreement or a subject of argument, but it does not reach in any way the proportions of a question of privilege.

MR. ANDRE—ASSURANCE OF ACCURATE ESTIMATES

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my point of order is related to the remarks of the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts). When clarifying his comments yesterday, he indicated, as a result of approvals or certain procedures within the Treasury Board not having been completed before the blue book went to press, that in fact the blue book of main estimates will not accurately assess the appropriations for that particular department. That explanation does not cover the point of order raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) yesterday, when he expressed concern about the fact that shortly the Blue Book estimates will be referred to appropriate committees. We have been told that the appropriations or estimates of at least one department are inaccurate.

My point of order is: what assurance can the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) give us that we in fact will be looking at the legitimate estimates of planned expenditures in the government, and not something which may or may not be wrong or inappropriate for one or more departments?

● (1512)

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the very simple answer is to recognize that at the time of the printing and tabling of the main estimates, the basic expenditure plan of the government was contained therein; but we know there is provision in our procedure for subsequent adjustments to programs, additions, deletions, changes and transfers between votes, a whole series of adjustments necessary for an institution the size of the government. Consequently, the provision for supplementary estimates is there. Of course, there will be some adjustments further down the road.

The figures referred to by the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) reflected the decision of the government on a policy basis, at the time the main estimates were sent to print, in advance of tabling, for the obvious reason that a strictly mechanical or administrative time frame is required. So there will be a subsequent adjustment to many programs, and I think that is what the Secretary of State implied.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when this matter was raised, the hon. gentleman said he would look into it. We have now discovered there is quite a substantial change with respect to one aspect. I was satisfied with that answer yesterday, and I took it that before the reference was made to the standing committees some attempt would be made to clear up in advance the total amount of the estimates with which those standing committees will have to deal.

The following questions are legitimate questions to the minister following upon his undertaking: Has that study been made? To what extent are the estimates, with which we will be dealing today and which we will be sending to the committees,

Point of Order

changed? Is the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) in a position to table the document today—to which we would be delighted to consent—and make a statement—which we would like to hear—in order to indicate, after the experience he has just described and before the matter finally goes to committee and leaves the House, what the true state of the estimates might be. I think it is rather important that, in considering the estimates in the committee, we start off from the correct base, not from something that is fluid in terms of the reference from the House to the committee. There is enough criticism of the whole procedure in dealing with the estimates without starting off from a base which is not reliable, and I think the President of Treasury Board would agree with that. Is he prepared to clarify this situation today?

Mr. Andras: There are no known errors in the main estimates as printed and tabled on February 22. Obviously, as I have indicated and as every member of the House knows, between the time of dealing with the main estimates as they were laid before the House of Commons on February 22 and the end of the fiscal year 1978-79, which concludes on March 31, 1979, about 13 months from now, there will be some supplementary estimates. That is the only issue involved here. The blue book is as accurate as human competence can guarantee it and I know of no errors or omissions in it as tabled the other day.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, that is the assurance I wanted.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad this point of order was brought out because I wondered if the Department of National Defence was alone in having these inaccurate estimates before the House. I have a written answer from the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) which was provided several months ago telling me that the additional cost for long range patrol aircraft would come to some \$71 million. The estimates reflect not a dime of that \$71 million, and yet he knew about it several months ago. The Krauss-Maffei contract for tanks is another such matter. Our dollar has been devalued in relationship to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Two occasions have presented themselves, one in particular when the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) tabled the estimates on which there was a round of questioning with regard to general matters. In addition, detailed questioning about the estimates of each individual department will take place when the estimates are before the committees. The only reason for accepting the point of order at this time is that it was known today that the minister would move the motion of reference to the standing committees.

Yesterday the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) said there was an error in one portion of those estimates, and I felt that before the motions were put today that error should be cleared up. To the extent it can be done, the error has been cleared up; but I would not want any hon. member to presume that this would allow points of order to be raised to question the minister today on the details of every department. That will be