

Estimates

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Honey): Order, please. It being after 9.45 o'clock p.m., it is my duty, in accordance with section (10) of Standing Order 58, to interrupt these proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of any item of business relating to supply before the House, including any bill or bills thereon.

Consequently, the first question is the following:

- (2150)

[English]

MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 1, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is the following one; the hon. President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) moves:

That Vote 1, in the amount of \$16,324,000 of the Department of Communications for Communications—operating expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1973 (less the amount voted in Interim Supply) be concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My point of order is based primarily on two parts of Standing Order 58 which is the standing order that governs our supply procedure. Standing Order 58(4)(a) reads, in part:

Twenty-four hours' written notice shall be given of an opposition motion on an allotted day or of a notice to oppose any item in the estimates.

Immediately under item No. 1 on page vii of today's order paper, which Your Honour has just read, is a notice of opposition in the name of my colleague, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett). This notice was filed on June 19 in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 58(4)(a), a portion of which I read just a moment ago. I may point out that there are many such notices of opposition on the order paper that is before us tonight, but the points I wish to make with respect to this one apply to all of the others, with the exception of three of them.

The notice that was given by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni in relation to item No. 1 which, of course, is before us quite properly because it was given at least 24 hours in advance, was accepted by the Table and is on the order paper. I now draw Your Honour's attention also to Standing Order 58(8) which reads as follows:

Opposition motions shall have precedence over all government supply motions on allotted days and shall be disposed of as provided in sections (9), (10) and (11) of this order.

When one reads sections (9), (10) and (11) of this order, and I do not think it is necessary for me to do so, he finds references therein to opposed items in the estimates.

My principal point of order is this: With the hon. member for Comox-Alberni having given notice of opposition to an item in the estimates, he has the right under Standing Order 58(8) to have his notice of opposition given precedence. However, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) subsequently put down a government notice of motion for the approval of a certain item in the estimates. The fact Your Honour has called that motion

first means that it is being given precedence over the notice of opposition presented by my colleague, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni.

Perhaps I might be permitted a word of explanation. I know this is not a time for debate and that one has to stick to procedure, but in the notice of motion given by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni he asks that the amount of money under Vote 1 of the Department of Communications, Information branch, be a sum not exceeding \$61,000. His reason was that that is approximately one quarter of the amount that is provided for information under the Department of Communications, as will be found on page 3-8 of the blue book of estimates where the figure is given as \$244,000.

What my hon. friend wanted this House to do was vote on the reduction of that \$244,000 for the information branch in this particular department to \$61,000. He placed that notice of motion first. I claim for him the provisions of Standing Order 58(8), but instead Your Honour has now read to us the motion in the name of the President of the Treasury Board which asks us to vote yes or no on a sum of \$16,324,000, which is the entire amount of Vote 1 in the estimates of the Department of Communications. What is the value of the Standing Order giving a member the right to give notice of opposition, a right which has been recognized by his notice being put on the order paper, if instead of having the chance to vote on reducing \$244,000 to \$61,000, we are being asked to vote yes or no on the sum of \$16,324,000? I suggest this is making a mockery of such rights as remain to us for the voting of supply as set out in Standing Order 58.

- (2200)

I point out that this is the first time the issue has arisen in this form. In previous sessions, since the new supply procedures came into effect, we have on a number of occasions given notice of opposition to certain votes or items in their entirety. There are three such notices of opposition on the order paper tonight. One is number three, in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis); one is No. 42, which is against the Senate and is in my name, and the third is No. 74 in the name of the hon. member for Cape Breton-The Sydneys (Mr. Muir). Each of those three, as I say, is a notice of opposition to the entire amount of an estimate. We have done this in previous sessions and it is quite true that in those sessions our notices of opposition to entire items were countered in each case by a notice of motion by the President of the Treasury Board in favour of an entire item.

Your Honour may ask why we did not raise objection at that time. The answer is that it did not make any difference; instead of our voting to eliminate an item we voted against a motion to pass an item. But tonight, for the first time since this procedure came into effect, we are faced with a different situation because what we are asking for now is not the right to vote against an entire item—we shall get that in the three cases I have cited—but for the right to vote for or against the reduction in the amount of an item. In the case of the first one, as I have made clear, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni has asked the House to vote for a notice of opposition under which he seeks to cut the amount of an item under the Department of Com-