

**Mr. Mazankowski:** The Auditor General stated, further, that the instruments used to provide that accountability and to provide parliament with meaningful information with which they can control expenditures are the estimates. That is the essence of the debate under our motion today. The unfortunate fact is that there is ambiguity and lack of certainty. Financial disclosures, both in the estimates and in the public accounts, are now inadequate for parliament to establish the accountability of the government. We know, of course, that if there is a devious technique in the books to circumvent, evade, or subvert, this government will seize upon that technique without hesitation.

**Mr. Baldwin:** They wrote the book on deviousness.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** In our view, there is no question that the government is engaged in practices which are beyond the scope of being legal and proper as far as the parliamentary traditions of this institution are concerned. As I said earlier, it may be expeditious for the government to proceed this way, but it is not proper. It may be shrewd from a parliamentary point of view, but there is a fundamental principle involved here and we say this practice should not continue. As a matter of fact, we strongly urge the government to discontinue the practice in the name of preserving the supremacy of this institution.

Yesterday, during the debate on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), many items were singled out which we in the opposition consider to be clearly questionable. In our view, these items constitute an abuse of the use of \$1 votes. I shall not recite once again the many items to which we take objection. I think the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton and, indeed, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), clearly outlined many of the areas about which we have serious reservations.

We hope the ruling of the Chair will uphold the previous ruling made by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux. He considered the abuse of amending legislation through \$1 votes totally contrary to the privileges and traditions of this House. There are 52 \$1 items in supplementary estimates D, but in reality we are being asked to approve a practice which \$1 votes would authorize in 65 cases. Some are acceptable, some are not. Some, in our view, clearly constitute a subversion of parliamentary authority.

● (1520)

We feel very strongly that amendments to legislation should be dealt with in a proper manner, namely, by the introduction of a bill whereby they can properly be debated and considered by parliament, and not by such slick, devious methods as the employment of the \$1 item. The expenditure of moneys, notwithstanding certain provisions of an enabling piece of legislation, is contrary to everything for which parliament stands. It should be considered in a manner other than that in which we approve estimates under existing rules. We will soon have another set of items in the supplementary estimates which will be classified as "notwithstanding" items.

### *Dollar Items*

In the area of amendments to non-money legislation or regulations there are as many as 12 instances where supplementary estimates D use \$1 votes in this manner. These \$1 items are used to fill three main purposes: first, to change the legal status of a government entity; second, to exempt a government entity from the application of a law; and, third, to amend legislation without recourse to a bill. Each of these seeks to circumvent parliament. All these changes should be accomplished through amendments to appropriate legislation or regulations. Through the use of a \$1 vote in place of a bill, this government is able to avoid Commons debate on a particular change. Because of current procedures which govern us in dealing with estimates, there may be no opportunity—or, at best, one opportunity in committee—to vote down a particular \$1 vote. Thus, the government is able to remove at least two opportunities for members to vote on a change and it removes the opportunity to state reservations, objections and suggest amendments on the floor of the House. This is tantamount to administration by edict.

**An hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Turning to Crown corporations, we take very grave objection to the establishment of a Crown corporation under the use of the \$1 item, as in the case of Via Rail Canada. Our concern is not with the substance, but with the method. While we may have some reservations about the principle of the establishment of Via Rail Canada, that is not what is in issue at this time. It is the method which the government has employed to bring about the establishment of Via Rail Canada. It authorizes the expenditures of up to \$240 million under the provisions of vote 52d, which can be found at page 120 of supplementary estimates D. This, in our view, is a major transportation policy decision and should be considered in this House in the form of a bill, rather than by back-door coercion. This action constitutes a clear contempt of parliament which has to be of the most blatant degree. One might even question the politics of the establishment of Via Rail Canada at this time, since the CTC is still in the process of studying the rail passenger service in this country and has not yet brought down its recommendation.

**An hon. Member:** It is a clear fraud.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** When we consider the powers which are going to be delegated to the minister under the provisions of the new transportation bill, that constitutes ministerial overkill in the most unorthodox proportions. We see the minister taking advantage of the powers which have yet to be passed on to him through the very questionable use of the \$1 vote in establishing a Crown corporation of this magnitude. Simply by the stroke of a pen, under vote 52d Via Rail Canada will be deemed to be a railway company incorporated pursuant to section 11 of the Railway Act.

This is not the first time this has occurred. The House will recall last year when the former president of Treasury Board, now the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien) established Loto Canada through supplementary