

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I am not easily provoked to answer, but when remarks like that are made I have to do so.

• (1110)

Would the Acting Prime Minister bring to the attention of the government the submission of the rules, particularly with reference to the examination of expenditures, to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization to the end that the rules that were in effect that permitted a proper examination by Parliament will be restored?

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

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, as the right hon. gentleman is very much aware, the procedures were changed a few years ago to permit the examination in detail of the estimates of the various departments in committees of the House.

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

**Mr. Sharp:** They have probably received more careful and detailed examination than at any previous time. This has meant that in the House we could devote more attention to other subjects. In addition, the opposition parties have had a number of allotted days. Whether they have used them to the best advantage is for them to judge, not for us.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, after this recent experience, which is quite contrary to that described by the minister, will he have consideration given to making this institution once more responsible for the preservation of responsibility with respect to the vast expenditures that are being undertaken?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. Order, please. I apologize to the hon. member. The hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. MacInnis:** Mr. Speaker, my point of order arises from the Acting Prime Minister's reference to what the committees can do with the estimates. I refer to the meetings of the finance committee last week when the chairman of that committee ran the committee in such a way that he maintained the privilege of ruling on his own decisions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member cannot cast reflections on a chairman of a committee or on any member in any capacity. In any event I suggest to the right hon. gentleman, to the Acting Prime Minister and to the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond that this is debate. For the moment I will recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre who has a supplementary question.

[Mr. Speaker.]

## SUGGESTED REVIEW OF WORK OF COMMITTEES ON ESTIMATES

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister arising out of his answer to the right hon. member for Prince Albert a moment ago. In view of the reliance the government seems to place on the consideration that is given to estimates in committees, will the government consider the possibility of reviewing the work on estimates that is done in committees to make sure that a more satisfactory accomplishment of our job in this area is achieved?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to pass along these suggestions from the right hon. member, the former Leader of the Opposition, and from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. We are very anxious to improve the rules of the House. All parties, however, agreed with the procedures that we are now operating under.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Not so.

**Mr. Sharp:** After the experience of last night I think our procedures could be improved.

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

**Mr. Sharp:** Therefore I have no hesitation in saying we would like to improve these procedures. But I do reiterate what I said before, and I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will admit it, that the estimates have received at least as careful consideration and even more careful consideration in committees as under the previous procedures.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Obviously we are going to continue the debate and we might as well accept that fact. There are a number of supplementaries. Hon. members will be recognized for that purpose, but I would hope the questions will be for the purpose of seeking information and the responses will be for the purpose of giving information, and that neither will be for the purpose of embarking on debate. The hon. member for Peace River.

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, my question is seeking information. In considering this matter would the Acting Prime Minister not give consideration to the suggestions made by a very independent and objective witness, the Auditor General, who in his last report referred to the fact that parliamentary control over expenditures is being steadily eroded?

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, in light of the answer of the Acting Prime Minister that the committees are doing the work, would he agree, when the government is looking at this question, to look at the experience of the Standing Committee on Broadcasting Films and Assistance to the Arts which deals with the estimates of the Secretary of State amounting to almost \$1 billion? These estimates did not get more than six to eight hours consideration in total.

**An hon. Member:** Whose fault is that?