

of supply, provided that all stages of the said bill, except the committee of the whole stage, shall be put to the House without amendment or debate".

I might try to explain the purport of it. What this amendment attempts to do is this. As I say, if the present motion passes, supplementary estimates go into committee, interim supply goes into committee, the estimates for the year go into committee. Supplementary estimates and interim supply all get voted on before the end of May 15. We do not discuss them any more in this House once this motion is passed.

Then, as I understand it, the main estimates for 1980-81 are dealt with in a similar manner, but they do not have to be brought back in the House and voted on until December. I think that is the procedure. But we no longer discuss them in this House either.

● (1720)

If this amendment is agreed to by the President of the Privy Council and the government, what will happen will be that on May 12 we will discuss for that day motions or bills relating to supplementary estimates or interim supply. We would vote on those motions or bills on May 12. Then we would go on for three days, May 13, 14, and 15, to consider in Committee of the Whole the supplementary estimates or interim supply.

We would all have our ordinary chance in Committee of the Whole to question ministers. I ask a question, I sit down, and then somebody else asks one. If there is a minister we are particularly interested in, we can question him for three days. It might be on energy policy or whatever is in the supplementary estimates. Anyway, we would all have a chance in Committee of the Whole for three days to really go into these estimates and into the question of the main estimates and interim supply. That is what we are suggesting.

We would have three days in Committee of the Whole, and this is far better than opposition days. This is Committee of the Whole where we can question ministers and attempt to get answers, where we can catch ministers not doing their homework, where we can pin down ministers who do not know what they are talking about or force them to give us some information, make things a bit hot for them. That is what ministers are for—to test their methods, make things hot for them, see if they know how to jump from the pan when it gets warmed up or whatever.

We would have three days, not opposition days where I get up and make a speech, the member over there gets up and makes a speech and somebody else makes a speech, which accomplishes very little, but three days of questioning ministers here where the television is in the House so that the people of Canada can see the process. Do they know what they are talking about? Does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources know what he is talking about? Does he have a blended cost? Does the Minister of Finance know what he is talking about? In three days they will see no, he certainly does not, that he said nothing as usual. Or they might say the Minister of Finance is a brilliant man, that he has turned back all inquiries and explained fully what his policy is. I will certainly be astounded if that turns out to be the case, but he is

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a man of long experience in this House. He has just been over to Hamburg. We know what happens when bachelors go to Hamburg, Mr. Speaker. I imagine he had quite a busy time there.

Anyway, that is the purport of this motion. Apart from the question of interim supply and supplementary estimates, all that would be voted on by May 15 so the President of the Privy Council gets his necessary business to the House.

Then we are suggesting that the estimates in general go out to committees. However, next December or whenever they are brought back from committee, the opposition can choose three departments. This is because we want to give our confreres in the opposition, the members of the New Democratic Party, a chance to participate. We are not like them. We do not want to cut them off from debate. We did not get up and object when Mr. Rodriguez was here speaking day after day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member again, but the usual tradition of the House is that the amendment which has been moved by the hon. member is read by the Chair to the members. I do not necessarily want to do that if the hon. member is going to finish his comments in the very near future.

Mr. Crosbie: I am almost finished, Mr. Speaker. I have a lot more to say, but there seems to be some upset in the chamber if I go on too long. What can one do?

What we are proposing is that when December comes, or whenever these main estimates come back to the House, the opposition would be able to say to the government that we want to have the estimates of three departments. The NDP can suggest one. Our confreres in the New Democratic Party may want to choose one. We will choose two. These will be departments that we would like to get more information on, or just raise burning topics of the moment. Probably this year energy would be one that there would be a lot of debate and discussion about, but it might be finance or any department. Who knows what is going to be very topical next fall?

The estimates of those departments will then come forward in a separate bill. We will go into Committee of the Whole stage. We will question the ministers of those departments until they satisfy us that they have given us the information that is required or they have satisfied the points brought up in the House.

This is not something we are suggesting as the opposition that we did not suggest as a government. It is something that as a government we said we are going to do because we believe in the House of Commons. We believe in trying to make this chamber function effectively, so that members can really feel they have some influence, not that they are just here speaking so they can send a few copies of speeches back to some of their constituents, or because somebody might be watching during the afternoon when they are speaking or whatever.

We would like a chamber that is effective. There are probably a dozen government departments, there might be twenty, that no one can quarrel with, but there may be a