

*Business of Supply*

I was under the impression that we were, during these three days, to discuss the whole of the supplementary estimates (B), but I realize that for three days our discussions will deal exclusively with an amount of \$1 to enable the government to carry on.

I imagine that I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker, if our debate is to be limited to this subject. I have listened attentively, not to the beginning, but to a large part of the presentation made by the hon. member for Peace River, and also to that of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. However, I would have liked to know beforehand what the views of the government were on the matter. Both the previous speakers have discussed at length the practice, which is gaining ground, of transferring credits from one account to another. Does this mean that some departments are unable to spend the money that the government or the house has allotted them, since such moneys are to be transferred to another department?

Mr. Speaker, I think that such a practice is really ridiculous. It shows that the government does not necessarily respect hon. members' viewpoint and, in my opinion, changes should be made in the way the estimates are introduced or in the manner in which the house is called upon to vote on them. The requirements of each department should be clearly explained. The supplementary estimates should inform hon. members as to how the government wants to spend the money it asks the house to vote, so that we may know what it wants and make the necessary recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, if such a practice does not change soon, opposition members will take the necessary steps to change it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask whether it is the intention of the President of the Treasury Board to deal with this matter? Having heard the initial statements, perhaps he could do so now so that we would know what his answers are.

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Speaker, it had been my hope to listen to all the observations and then attempt some kind of an answer to them because I am persuaded that a more than adequate answer exists. From what the hon. gentleman has suggested I assume that no other hon. members wish to take part in the discussion of this motion.

**Mr. Lewis:** Not necessarily.

[*Mr. Laprise.*]

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, may I say that I happen to know that the hon. member for Edmonton West wishes to speak. He happens to be in the phone booth in the lobby and he wishes to speak when he returns to the chamber.

**Mr. Drury:** Mr. Speaker, if the opposition cannot quite organize its troops perhaps I should go ahead and say a few words with the possible danger of making irrelevant all that the hon. member for Edmonton West would like to say. However, I would be glad to yield my position to him right now as I see he is back in the chamber.

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I apologize to hon. members but I was called out of the chamber on an urgent matter. My first concern, as indicated by other hon. members, is the impression created by the minister in a news story on Wednesday last which quoted him as saying that parliament had lost or was losing control over the expenditure of public funds.

I was surprised that greater attention was not paid by the press and other commentators to what was happening in the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates. Many editorials have been written urging parliamentarians to make sure that every penny is accounted for and to insist that the government trim things to the bone.

• (3:50 p.m.)

In the committee we tried to get down to the real nub of the question. We examined these final supplementary estimates in a way that brought forward a lot of information. I commend to hon. members the transcripts of evidence which have now all been published, the last one coming in this afternoon, a little late in the day, and I shall have something to say about that in a little while. From these transcripts hon. members can see that full information was given. But how little comment!

I want to make it quite clear that I have no complaint at all to make to the minister about his availability to the committee. He was with us at the beginning of our studies, and following that the officers of the Treasury Board were very frank and open. On the last day, when committee members asked for certain ministers to be present, they came, I know at some inconvenience to one of them. I was appreciative of that effort. This is the sort of performance that will generate a degree of confidence between the government and the