

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** May I take advantage of your generous suggestion, Mr. Speaker, to make a brief contribution I am moved to do this by the eloquent remarks of the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) who had in mind the conditions which existed in earlier days. If Your Honour were to follow through what happens to these estimates in the standing committees and when they come back to the House, he would recognize that we are in fact inhibited in making any amendments. The only amending procedure would be by a substantive motion brought by a private member in the form of a public bill which, as Your Honour knows, has a great chance of being voted upon. Otherwise, I do not see how amendment would be possible. What has happened has been that blue book of estimates, brought in with a message from His Excellency, has merged the estimates with the existing statutes. There is, therefore, no chance or opportunity for a member of the House under the present practice to amend them. Under Standing Order 14, the estimates are peremptorily referred to the committees. If consideration is not completed by a certain date, they are assumed to be completed.

How can any member of the House, acting as a member of a particular committee which is dealing with this issue, move to change the name of the department? When the estimates come back to the House for final passage before May 31, how is it possible in the limited debate which is available to members of the House for any member to make a motion which would successfully bring before the House the opportunity to divide on this issue? At one time the rules of the House made this possible, but if the issue is that any member of this House is preempted from attempting in any way to put back the name of the department as has been suggested by the hon. member for St. John's East, then he has lost that opportunity. His amendment is overshadowed and merged because of the particular action on the part of the government at this time.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Would the hon. member permit a question? Does the hon. member want His Honour to rule that the Chairman was wrong and that the committee of the whole cannot now proceed with the amendment of the hon. member for St. John's East?

**Mr. Baldwin:** I hesitate to do this. His Honour is well versed in this issue and I would hesitate to suggest to him what decision he should make. It would be wrong for me to do so.

**Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster):** There is just one question which I would like to pose to Your Honour. Would the government have taken this action had there been a minority government?

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank hon. members for their contributions to this interesting debate. I might say at the outset that I will not attempt to reply to the question posed by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell). It is certainly beyond the very limited responsibility of the

*Government Organization Act, 1970*

Chair which is simply to rule on the procedural aspect of the matter before the House.

I have before me the report which came from the Chairman of the committee of the whole by way of an appeal under Standing Orders. I see that the Chairman ruled that the amendment had been proposed in accordance with the usages and practices of the House and in relation thereto. As has been suggested by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the point is, from a procedural standpoint, that an amendment was proposed by the hon. member for St. John's East and there was some question as to whether or not it was in order. The Chairman of the committee of the whole ruled that the proposed amendment was in order.

From a procedural standpoint the question now is whether the tabling of the estimates today has the result of making the amendment no longer correct procedurally because, let us not forget, this is the only point on which the Speaker or the Chairman can rule. The point raised by the hon. member for St. John's East, and by some of his colleagues in the House, may be very valid from a substantive point of view. There may be something morally wrong about tabling estimates which assume that an amendment proposed by an hon. member in the course of a debate is not going to be accepted.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** At the same time, this relates much more to the aspect of tabling the estimates than to the procedural aspect of the amendment before us. The Chairman has ruled that the amendment is in order and that its procedural acceptability is not affected in any way by the tabling of the estimates, that Parliament as an institution is free to consider it objectively and to decide on it without relation to the tabling of the estimates or what may be in those estimates.

It seems to me that this ruling is a very fair one, and I would hesitate at this stage to say that the Chairman's decision should be overruled. I must come to the conclusion that I agree with the Chairman of the committee of the whole, and I am in full agreement also with the reasons he gave in support of his ruling.

• (5:20 p.m.)

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

**Mr. Speaker:** The House will now resume the committee of the whole.

And the House having resumed in committee:

**The Acting Chairman (Mr. Richard):** Order. When the committee's deliberations were interrupted we were on clause 14.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Are we reverting back now to Part I, clause 2, which is what we were on when the ruling of the previous Chairman was appealed?