

the total vote in the estimates. I do not recall that this question of procedure has ever been considered in the House. I think we might reflect on the fact that perhaps we fell into this procedure accidentally. I feel that perhaps one of the questions to which Your Honour might give consideration is an interpretation, which is the sort of thing we have to rely upon as coming from you, of whether or not the term "item" and the term "vote" are synonymous, and whether that was the intent of the people who drafted our current set of regulations.

But certainly according to my recollection, if one were raising an objection to an item in the estimates in committee of supply, one could define it much more narrowly than a vote, in the terms in which votes are set out in the estimates as we have them presented to us today. My feeling for the common sense of the situation suggests that we are unnecessarily binding ourselves into a restrictive position so far as the freedom we used to have to move for the reduction of a vote is concerned. Some of us at least feel that that is a very important part of the function of parliament, that it goes really to the root of our beginnings as a body to exercise a proper check on the activities of the Crown. I feel that this particular matter is part of a problem that has been brought forward by the procedural situation today, where obviously it is the desire that certain specific and rather limited sums of money be objected to rather than the whole amount allotted for the operations of a given department or branch of government. The whole question of the ability of members of the House to exercise their displeasure upon a particular officer of government or upon a particular minister of government by moving for the reduction of their salary is such a traditional right that I hope Your Honour will find some way of ensuring that, even within the ambit of the present rules, that kind of freedom will remain in our hands.

● (1550)

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this particular point because item No. 7 in the list of opposed items in the estimates has caused me some considerable confusion. I should like to draw the wording to your attention because I think it is relevant.

In item No. 7 of the opposed items, the hon. member for the Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) gives notice of his opposition to the \$4,310,000 which is for "(Construction and Design) for the Toronto International Airport No. 2 at Pickering". This causes me great difficulty because the wording of the estimate to which reference is made, as found at pages 27-44 and 27-55, of the main estimates, is "Construction Design" not "Construction and Design". As an individual member of parliament, I certainly would vote against an estimate for construction of that airport at this time, in view of the fact an independent inquiry is being conducted, but I certainly have no objection to voting in favour of design funds.

It seems to me appropriate that in the wording of such motions the opposition should accurately reflect the item in the estimates to be opposed. In this particular case it does not. I feel that motion No. 7 should be considered improper and out of order by virtue of the fact that it does not reflect any item in the estimates. There is no item in the 1973-74 estimates which deals with construction and

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design at all. Therefore, I would request that this motion be ruled out of order.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I find the point of order raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) somewhat surprising. I especially found surprising the plea that he has made to the House that we ought to co-operate immediately in bringing the supply bill before the House so that it would be possible for him or his colleagues to take certain actions in the committee of the whole. Certainly, nothing done by the government has prevented that or will prevent that. What will prevent it, or at least postpone it is the action taken by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen); first of all, in putting down his motion of which he gave notice on Friday. The House had every right to expect that the official opposition, having taken that formal move of giving us notice, would be prepared to proceed with this motion. In accordance with that expectation, we are prepared to debate the motion and will have a good deal to say about the request that certain votes of various departments be opposed.

We cannot take the hon. member for the Yukon by the hand today and force him to move his motion but if he does not want to move his motion, in my view we then take up vote No. 1 of opposed items in the estimates, a motion in the name of the President of the Treasury Board that vote No. 70 in the amount of \$45 million of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development be concurred in. We want to debate that motion.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But it is not your day!

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member for Edmonton West makes the point that it is not our day. That is a rather odd comment. It is an allotted day; it is devoted to the business of supply and the business of supply is the first item under government orders. While it is true that under the rules the opposition is enabled to put forward motions which could have attracted a vote if it had wished today, certainly the day itself is doing the public business because at the end of the day parliament will be asked to deal with the whole voting of main supply for the operation of the public service. So, it certainly is a day devoted to public business and government business because the whole apparatus is designed to permit parliament, at the very final moment, to deal with the question of supply.

Had my hon. friends had the foresight that is required in this operation, they would have desisted from putting any motions down today and would have had the bill in their hands the very moment we got into government orders. The bill would be there because they would not have put any other matter on the order paper. Instead, they have filled up the order paper with motions of various kinds and now they come to us to extricate them from political and procedural difficulties. They say to us, "Members of the government, please co-operate with us and help us find a way" and then they are shocked that we do not help them find a way to oppose the supply required to manage the affairs of the country. They ask us to help them find a way to cut out the expenditures that the government is recommending to the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Shame!