

Supply—Privy Council

the redistribution act, represents approximately 75,000 people in this house. We are all equal, therefore, although I must admit that, if one may use a well-known expression, some are more equal than others. When I pose a question to a minister, it is posed in the question period because we can ask questions at that time only if they are of an urgent nature. Of course, if we must wait for two, three or more days for a reply, this destroys the very purpose for which the question period was established.

The estimates we have before us also make us aware of the fact that in government, as with a ship at sea, there is a tendency for barnacles to become attached to the hull, and nothing short of a complete refit will remove them. For example, we still have listed the expenses of the royal commission on pilotage, the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism, the royal commission on farm machinery, the commission on security procedures and the commission on the status of women. I want it clearly understood that I am not anti-French Canadian, but I point out that the bilingualism and biculturalism commission has already spent over \$7 million of the taxpayers' money.

● (3:40 p.m.)

I believe that Canadians generally would welcome the termination of this most expensive royal commission in our history as an economy measure. I would be the first to state that the commission has been helpful. It has pointed out to us the necessity of giving certain recognition to those in our country who are of French ancestry. But we are facing serious economic problems at the present time and there is a need for a reassessment of some of these commissions.

The same thinking would readily apply to other commissions that are now sitting. For example, over half a million dollars are being set aside for the royal commission on the status of women. I criticized this expenditure during the recent election campaign, and I still believe the government could and should terminate this commission's sittings immediately. Canadian women today are well aware of their rights, their status and the place of importance they occupy in our society. They have the right to own property and to vote, they can run for the town council and the provincial legislature, and we have one lady member in the House of Commons. I believe there is more concern today over the rising cost of everything in our society, and it is the cost of these royal commissions as listed in

the privy council estimates which is constantly increasing some of our costs and making it extremely difficult for women in all classes of society to make ends meet.

With these brief comments I will take my seat, but I do hope the government will give some thought to the matters I raised.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to cut off the discussion of ministerial absenteeism in the question period. Others who wish to continue may do so, but just as a little interlude I thought I might ask a question or two about the item that is before us. I am afraid that if I do so I will disprove a point I often make. I have often contended that we do not deal with the estimates here on the floor of the house, that we use the estimates as pegs for debates.

Mr. Drury: Do not disturb the practice.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There speaks a conservative. This is one of the reasons I have argued for a greater use of the committees. I think that that is where estimates should be gone over with a fine tooth comb. But just as an interlude, let me get out my fine tooth comb and ask a question or two about this item. It is item No. 1, maintenance and operation of the Prime Minister's residence. We are being asked to vote \$40,300. According to the blue book in front of us, that is \$300 less than we were asked to vote for the previous fiscal year.

The book that is before us now is called the revised estimates. Before that we had the unrevised estimates, and in it the figure was \$41,100, so that it looks as though there is a cut of \$800 in the expenses of running the Prime Minister's residence. This so called cut received very wide publicity, not only in the papers but in that program which perhaps is the best source of news, namely Max Ferguson's show in the morning. I think we all recall the interesting reception of businessmen which was held at 24 Sussex Drive one night just after this cut was announced, and of how the cleaning women were there at night because they were put on reduced wages and had to get employment elsewhere during the day, while at night they were cleaning the Prime Minister's residence. We also recall when the Prime Minister telephoned for taxis to get the businessmen away, because if they stayed much longer he would have to feed them. So a great deal of attention was given to the tremendous stroke of the Prime Minister in reducing by \$800 the