

*Interim Supply*

toward parliament, particularly during the last four years. The government seems to think it has been in the saddle for so long that it really does not matter what parliament wishes to do; it gets its will in one way or another.

With regard to the interim supply proposal before us, may I point out that this is the only way the members of the House of Commons are being given an opportunity to vote on the proposed increases in old age pensions, family allowances, disability pensions, veterans benefits and so on. We are being given this opportunity by means of a proposal to approve, in an interim supply bill, of a fraction of the supplementary estimates which were tabled not long ago by the Minister of Finance.

Because we want to see even these very small increases in pensions come into effect as soon as possible we shall of course support the resolution before us. That is now the only way effect can be given, since parliament is soon to be dissolved, to the announced increases to which reference has already been made this morning. However, I want to register our very strong objection to the way the government has chosen to deal with this question of increases in old age pensions and similar benefits and also with respect to veterans pensions and allowances. I object to the method that is being followed because to us it is an insult to old age pensioners, veterans and others to have the important matter of their pensions dealt with by this type of legislation in this emergency and unsatisfactory method.

As I have said on other occasions there is nothing more important, in our view, that comes before parliament than social security. We think social legislation and veterans legislation should be fully and properly considered by parliament. We think the best jobs on social legislation and veterans legislation have been done when these matters have been referred to committees such as the special joint committee on old age security which met in 1950 or the several committees on veterans affairs which have met from time to time.

In those instances full study was given to these matters, and we think the results were good. But here we have a case where the government has refused to do anything about these important matters throughout the lifetime of this parliament, but on the eve of the election it decides to do just a little bit. It makes that decision so close to the time of the election that there is no opportunity to deal with it by amending legislation in the proper fashion, or by arranging for any discussion in the house or in committee. Instead,

it manufactures a device which seldom if ever before has been used in the history of the parliament of Canada.

Not only is it an offence to those people who are affected; it is an offence to the importance of this legislation to deal with it in this way, and we feel that it is offensive to proper parliamentary practice. I refer especially, Mr. Chairman, to the fact that the government is using what is known as the device of legislating by items in the estimates. Items Nos. 663 to 670 in the further supplementary estimates tabled a few days ago by the Minister of Finance are items which purport to amend existing statutes. They purport to amend the Old Age Security Act, the Old Age Assistance Act, the Blind Persons Act, the Disabled Persons Act, the Maritime Freight Rates Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act and the Pension Act. I draw attention in particular to the fact that Mr. Watson Sellar, the Auditor General of Canada, has on more than one occasion expressed critical comments concerning the practice of legislating by putting items in the estimates.

I have before me a document from which I have had occasion to quote on previous occasions. It is a copy of a memorandum which the Auditor General used when he appeared some years ago before a committee of the other place. The material contained in this memorandum has also appeared at least once, if not more often, in the reports which the Auditor General makes annually to parliament. I draw particular attention to what appears in this memorandum under the heading, "Vote Texts That Legislate."

After making a reference to vote 352 of the main appropriation act for 1931, which happened to be the vote which authorized an annual motor car allowance to be paid to ministers, the Speakers of both houses, and the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, Mr. Sellar points out that payments have been made every year since that time by relying on the text of the 1931 vote. He admits that legislation other than by means of an appropriation act is a convenience when a need is transitory. He goes on to say:

Furthermore, it avoids cluttering the statute books with expired legislation. But from the constitutional viewpoint it is open to the objection that it is, in fact, incomplete legislation because the mode employed circumscribes deliberations by the Senate.

I am not one who usually worries over much about Their Honours in the other place, but we do have a constitution under which we operate, and under that constitution parliament has three branches, the crown, the Senate and the House of Commons; and Mr. Sellar points out that when you legislate by