

*Interim Supply*

**The Chairman:** Does the committee give consent to having these documents printed in *Hansard*?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

[*Editor's note: See Appendix for the documents in question.*]

**Mr. Woolliams:** The minister graciously said he would answer questions at the end of his statement. I would ask him this. If, on the basis of his argument this afternoon, he feels legally justified in taking the action he did, why did he not take that step at the beginning of this debate and say to the opposition—

**An hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Woolliams:** If the minister is so concerned about time being taken—and it is all controlled under the new rules, anyway—why did he not make that transfer of funds immediately? Why did he wait so long to find out his rights in that regard?

**Mr. Benson:** I presumed when this debate began that the opposition would act, as in previous debates, in a normal and reasonable manner in dealing with interim supply. I did not anticipate that the official opposition would stretch out this debate to ten days. As soon as it became obvious to the government that the opposition did not intend to act in a normal manner, as has been the case ever since confederation in Canada, I deemed it necessary to take the steps I did.

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

**Mr. Knowles:** May I ask the minister one further question? When he receives the opinion of the deputy minister of justice on this matter in written form, will he table it?

**Mr. Benson:** At this point I should like simply to say that I will consider the matter. A question has been raised previously in connection with tabling of legal opinions provided by law officers of the crown for ministers of the crown. I should like to take this question into consideration before a decision is made.

**Mr. Knowles:** While the minister is taking this into consideration will he read the arguments advanced by Liberal members of the house in the session of 1962-63 when the government of that day was asked to table an opinion with regard to a certain order in council?

[Mr. Knowles.]

**Mr. Benson:** I will certainly undertake to read the arguments put forward by the Liberal opposition of that day, as well as arguments made in reply by the Conservative government.

**Mr. Douglas:** May I ask the minister whether he will give some thought to the fact that while, normally, a legal opinion given to a minister is confidential, and understandably so, this is a matter which affects the rights of parliament and its control of the purse strings. So parliament, as well as the minister, is entitled to know the terms of this opinion.

**Mr. Benson:** I can assure hon. gentlemen opposite that I shall give all matters with respect to the legal opinion careful thought. I can assure them that such a legal opinion was obtained from the Department of Justice.

**An hon. Member:** Based on what?

**Mr. Benson:** It is based on interpretation of this particular section as applied to the particular situation which existed.

**The Chairman:** The hon. member for Timmins.

**Mr. Churchill:** I would have the floor in ordinary circumstances, unless the hon. member wishes to ask a question.

**The Chairman:** I understood the hon. member wished to ask a question.

**Mr. Martin (Timmins):** No; I wanted to take part in the debate.

**Mr. Churchill:** I do not intend to speak at great length on this subject at the moment, but I thought there should be a suitable reply to some of the statements which the minister has made.

Before going on to the substance of what I have to say, may I ask the minister a question? Is the hon. gentleman informing us now that the total amount of money which he required in order to meet the salaries of civil servants and others was \$2.16 million and that no other moneys were transferred or used or taken from the contingencies fund except that amount of money?

• (4.50 p.m.)

**Mr. Benson:** Mr. Chairman, what I said was that in looking at all the accounts we found we had enough money for ten departments. If my hon. friend will read my statement, he will see I was very careful in what I said. We found we had full supply in ten departments,