

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 16, 1990

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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[*English*]

### 1990-91 MAIN ESTIMATES

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

**Mr. Speaker:** Before commencing debate, I would like to give a ruling which I undertook to do some days ago.

During the course of the sitting, Thursday, February 22, 1990, three different members raised questions relating to the Estimates and the traditional lock-up preceding their presentation by the President of the Treasury Board.

The first question was raised as a point of order by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who noted that while 87 Parts I and II of the Estimates were being tabled, only 73 Part III reports were available and complained about the 14 missing Part III reports.

Later in the day, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby rose on a question of privilege to object to a lack of information respecting certain specific programs during the lock-up allowing members an advanced look at the Estimates prior to their tabling.

The third complaint came from the hon. member for Mackenzie who challenged the accuracy or credibility of data printed in the Part III report for Agriculture Canada.

[*Translation*]

I have had an opportunity to consider all three cases and am now prepared to rule on them.

With respect to the first matter, the Hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell argued that the government breached a rule of the House in not tabling all of the Part III reports at the time Parts I and II of the Estimates were presented. The Hon. Member recalled that in 1982 the House had concurred in the Twelfth

Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts which supported major reforms to the preparation of the Estimates. The Hon. Member further argued that in not presenting all of the Part III reports, the Government had failed to respect the expressed wish of the House with regard to Estimates.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan intervened to support the complaint made by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. On behalf of the government, the parliamentary secretary to the Government House Leader explained two points. He maintained that the government had complied with the rules of the House, in that Part II of the Estimates, known as the Main Estimates, are all that are explicitly required to be tabled according to the Standing Orders, and that the Main Estimates were presented in advance of the March 1 deadline.

Moreover, the parliamentary secretary indicated that the government fully intended to provide the 14 missing Part III reports on or before March 12. This statement elicited an objection from the hon. member for Windsor—Lake St. Clair, who pointed out that the Standing Orders set March 1 as the date by which the Estimates are to be referred to the standing committee.

I want all members to know that I have considered this issue very carefully. I have reviewed the Twelfth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and statements made by the President of the Treasury Board when the present format of the Estimates was introduced over a span of years, beginning, I believe, in 1981.

[*Translation*]

I can understand the sense of frustration expressed by the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, but I must point out that technically, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader is correct in claiming that the rules, that is the Standing Orders, require simply that the Main Estimates be referred to standing committees by March 1. In the present format of the Estimates, Part II constitutes the Main Estimates, the document that directly relates to the votes that will