

THE SENATE

Tuesday, October 22, 1957

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

APPROPRIATION BILL NO. 6

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, a message has been received from the House of Commons with Bill 11, for granting Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of the financial year ending the 31st March, 1958, to which they desire the concurrence of the Senate.

The bill was read the first time.

SECOND READING

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable senators, I would like, with the consent of the house, to move second reading of this interim supply bill tonight, because of circumstances which have never arisen before and are not likely to arise again.

In the spring of 1957 the Government of the day brought down a budget which contained certain estimates. Then Parliament passed an interim supply bill to provide supply for a six-month period ending October 31. When the new Government came into power, on June 10, it found it could not call a session of Parliament in September, although apparently both parties had anticipated there would be such a session when they made this deal with respect to the supplementary estimates, and voted supply only to the end of October. Before the former Government went to the country it promised an increase in salaries to civil servants, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, members of the armed forces and certain classes of that kind, but apparently there was not enough time to provide for these salary increases before the election came on.

When the new Government came into power it saw fit to fulfil the salary promises that had been made, but not enough money had been voted in the estimates, which will run out on October 31. If new estimates are not put through by that date, Thursday of next week, there will not be sufficient funds to pay the employees to whom I have referred.

Further supplementary bills will be introduced, because this one will take care of only the shortage in October and the requirements for November. Estimates will also have to be brought down and voted on for December of 1957 and January, February and March of 1958. The Government's expenditures for those items and any other items beyond the original estimates will have to be included in those supplementary estimates to come. I reserve to all honourable senators the right to discuss or examine all the general estimates for those four months. I would ask honourable senators to permit this bill to be put through tonight, so that the Governor General or his representative may come here on Thursday to give Royal Assent to the bill.

The bill is somewhat complicated, but fundamentally it is being introduced for the very reason I have stated. I am quite willing to give any explanation I am able to give. I may say, and I think this is something we ought to remember, that the House of Commons put this bill through in a very short time, by unanimous vote. They of course were very close to the estimates and understood the matter clearly, some of the members of the former Government and some of the members of the new Government having been in the other house at the last session. Apparently, it was not very difficult. They indulged in some high talk, but I do not think it had anything to do with the estimates at all. I read the report, and it looked to me as though the discussion of the estimates was very limited, if they were discussed at all, and therefore it does not seem to me to be necessary to delay passage of the bill.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: Are we now on second reading?

Hon. Mr. Haig: Honourable senators, I move second reading of this bill.

The Hon. the Speaker: Has the motion a seconder?

Hon. Mr. Haig: I will hand in the motion in writing. This is mistake No. 1 for me—I should have handed it in earlier.

The Hon. the Speaker: It is moved by the Honourable Senator Haig, seconded by the Honourable Senator Aseltine, that the bill be read the second time.

Hon. W. Ross Macdonald: Honourable senators, I have no intention of holding up passage of this bill tonight. However, I should like certain information, and to know clearly just what we are discussing. I understand that this bill covers interim supply in respect to the main estimates which were tabled in the House of Commons in the last session of