

Alleged Irregularity in Defence Estimates

armed forces is concerned—a question that, as Your Honour knows, is now before a standing committee of this house—then I suggest there is in fact a rearrangement that is prohibited by the precedents. I suppose that when we get to the point where this house is asked to vote interim supply on these estimates we are going to be faced with a problem, Mr. Speaker. I think that was one of the points made by the hon. member for Edmonton West.

However, Mr. Speaker, until we do get to that stage I suggest that there is no question of privilege; because as I read the motion moved yesterday by the President of the Treasury Board it was a motion that these estimates be placed before this house. It was not a motion to deal with the estimates. According to page 13875 of *Hansard* the President of the Treasury Board said:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to table copies in English and French of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1968—

That is not a motion putting these estimates before the house for consideration. None of them has been entered at this point, so I therefore suggest there can be no question of privilege at this point. The estimates have simply been tabled in the house.

So I submit, Mr. Speaker, that while there may be a question of privilege when we are asked to approve either part or all of these estimates and it is found that the form has been rearranged, I do suggest to Your Honour that at this point there is not. In addition, Mr. Speaker, when we reach the stage where we require interim supply, if this occurs before the consideration of the armed services act now before the committee is completed, it may then be necessary for the Minister of Defence or somebody to withdraw the estimates of the department of defence and substitute therefor estimates in a form that does in fact comply with the previous practice.

In my submission, Mr. Speaker, we have not reached that stage yet. As of this date, therefore, I see no question of privilege.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington South): Mr. Speaker, I think the matter is as plain as this. Yesterday the President of the Treasury Board tabled the estimates of the various departments of government for this house to peruse, so that the members may be ready to discuss them on a future occasion. The minister presented the estimates in the way estimates are supposed to be tabled, showing what [Mr. Olson.]

money each department will need in the ensuing year under conditions established or set up in that department, according to what parliament may approve. Estimates are governed by the constitutions of departments.

The estimates for the Department of National Defence were not tabled in this way. They were not tabled according to the constitutional set-up of the Department of National Defence as it now exists.

Mr. Hellyer: Quite the contrary.

Mr. Hales: The constitution of the department may be changed later, after this house has debated the point. The point is that these estimates are tabled on the basis of what the new department will be under unification.

Mr. Hellyer: The hon. member is three years out of date.

Mr. Hales: The estimates, therefore, for this particular department were not tabled in their proper form. As a result I say that the minister has tabled a wrong set of estimates for this department.

It is quite true that the public accounts committee recommended that the various votes be as clear and concise as possible while giving all the information that it is possible to give, that members of the house may vote intelligently on the expenditures listed under each vote. I cannot refer to these votes in detail, but taking a quick glance at the new estimates of the Department of National Defence one sees that no figures for personnel are given, as were given in the previous year. Details are not given, under headings of votes, though these details were given last year. So it is clear that the estimates are not tabled in the form recommended by the public accounts committee.

I say the government has asked this house to study a set of estimates which do not conform with the constitution of the Department of National Defence. If this house is to study these estimates at a later date they must be put in the form they appeared in previous years, until such time as parliament passes or rejects the unification bill.

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the house should recall what the hon. member for Medicine Hat said in the concluding part of his observations, that all that has happened with regard to this matter