

Interim Supply

moved by the leader of the opposition several weeks ago with regard to Mr. Speaker—

The leader of the opposition was then talking on another motion for interim supply about the conduct of the Speaker. The chairman continued:

—I find also that in the estimates there are items dealing with the allowances to Mr. Speaker—

And therefore he was permitted to bring up the whole question of the conduct of the Speaker.

The Chairman: This afternoon I dealt with the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think it would be practical to review or to repeat what I said this afternoon. To me, this ruling of the Chair was not specific at all. The chairman ruled simply that he did not know how he could object to a certain subject being discussed. If hon. members will recall, this afternoon I indicated that it would be proper to make general references to the administration to come to the conclusion that interim supply should not be voted. What I am afraid of is that the debate might take the same form as the debate on a supply motion, when any hon. member is entitled to bring up any grievance he wishes. If the Chair were to allow such a debate, hon. members will realize that it would be completely disorderly, and it would go much further and be a much wider debate than any other debate provided for under the rules in which hon. members can air all their grievances, I am thinking of debates such as the budget debate, the throne speech debate, debate on a supply motion or on item one of any departmental estimates.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, we in this group are opposed to the privy council item being passed. We are opposed to it being passed because we think there has been an abrogation of the power that should have been exercised by the government on a previous occasion. Mr. Chairman, I desire at this time to move:

That the motion be amended by adding at the end of paragraph (a) the following words: "save and excepting \$83,861.84, being one sixth of vote No. 309 as contained in said main estimates.

Obviously that is in keeping with your admonition that if a motion is moved it should state a specific reduction in the total estimate and relate to a particular item. What we are moving relates to the privy council item and indicates our strong protest about the way the whole question has been mis-handled by the government.

I tried to discuss this subject somewhat less than a year ago. I recall very clearly your predecessor at that time feeling that the question could not be discussed because it was then before the privy council and he threatened this group with expulsion from the

chamber. I believe it was an error on his part to go that far and I would hope that after having waited with great patience, and I may say to the detriment of the rights of Canadians, until a full year elapsed there will be no endeavour at this time to close off debate and impose closure.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Argue: Closure apparently occurs only when it is applied by a government to the Conservative party. When the Conservative party applies it to someone else it is to ensure orderly debate.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Irresponsible nonsense.

The Chairman: Order. I will ignore the temptation of the hon. member for Assiniboia and put the question.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, I must rise on a point of order on this amendment. This day has seen some extraordinary things. Indeed, we have seen a travesty made of the proceedings of the committee of supply on an interim supply resolution. The kind of debate in which hon. members opposite have engaged today could only be relevant if at all on the basis that the procedure in committee of supply at this stage is somehow to be treated as assimilable with the procedure which the house has established on motions to resolve the house into committee of supply.

On such motions only one amendment is permitted. An amendment to an amendment is permitted, but only one original amendment is permitted. If this kind of proceeding has anything to justify it whatever under the rules it could only be on the basis of assimilation with such motions. On that basis a second amendment or further amendments are not permissible.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I cannot endure that. I mean to say that of all the absurdity that has ever been uttered in the House of Commons this is the most absurd. If there is one thing we still have a right to do in British parliament, it is to move to reduce any item. While I have not the faintest sympathy with this silly amendment, it is perfectly in order.

Mr. Starr: Silly amendment is right, and yours was just as silly.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, the point is that we are not dealing with a succession of items. That is where the hon. member is wrong. If we are in committee of supply and dealing with an item, yes, you can have a succession of amendments to reduce, but that is not the situation before us now. We have a resolution. Hon. members opposite