

Report. You could not pay that out of this \$70 million item because a different vote wording would be required. As you can see, this is quite a dilemma to be faced with.

There are substantial numbers of programs arising in the course of each year where a government, for reasons it considers to be justifiable, decides that instead of simply saying "We are tied hand and foot and we will have to wait until next year," that there is something they should do and they take the responsibility of doing it by way of a supplementary estimate.

It is the practice at Treasury Board meetings—perhaps it is wrong but we do not think it is—when we are working on the main estimates not to include anything put forward by departments at that time as a proposal which has not already received either cabinet or legislative approval. We do not wish our main estimates to include sums for purposes for which Parliament may be asked three months later to approve legislation. Therefore many of these items put forward to us in the estimates but which we know are prospective commitments are taken out of the main estimates and included in the overall forecast of expenditure, so that the Minister of Finance may include that in his global figure when he gives his prospective estimate of expenditures. But it has to be put in the supplementary estimates when legislation is eventually passed by Parliament, or cabinet makes a decision. I offer this not in defence but as an explanation as to why we find ourselves in this situation.

Senator HUGESSEN: It is an interesting situation, and I thank you for the information.

The CHAIRMAN: Senator Hugessen, before you came in we had a discussion about the meetings of this committee and it was felt that we should meet every Thursday morning when the Senate is sitting. We realize that that is the morning on which the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications sits. However if you were calling a meeting we would endeavour to arrange things so that they would not overlap. I thought I should draw your attention to this fact. This was the feeling of the committee.

Senator BURCHILL: Coming back to Senator Hugessen's question, I would like to ask Dr. Davidson to give me some idea as to the average percentage which the supplementary estimates are of the main estimates.

Dr. DAVIDSON: I think a good guess would be 5 per cent or 6 per cent or something of that order. It is certainly less than 10 per cent. I cannot think of a year in which the total supplementaries for the entire year have been as much as 10 per cent. They have been less than 10 per cent in any year that I can recall.

Senator HUGESSEN: Is there a tendency for them to rise?

Dr. DAVIDSON: As I said to Senator Burchill a short while ago, it fluctuates from \$400 million to \$600 million a year. If you were to chart the trend you would probably find that the supplementary estimates as a percentage of the total are fairly constant. They rise consistently with the total of government spending.

Senator ISNOR: I was rather interested in the question asked by Senator Hugessen. I was wondering whether from the point of view of the public it would not reflect to the credit of the Government of the day, and particularly the Minister of Finance, if the gross amount was included in the estimates in the first case, and later on if there should be a surplus left over from the estimate that it could go to his credit.

Dr. DAVIDSON: Well, sir, it would save us a lot of trouble at Treasury Board if we could come and ask Parliament to give us all the sums of money we thought we might need whether in fact we needed them or not. But if we were to do so I have no doubt we would be attacked by members of the House of Commons and the Senate for asking for a lot more money than there would be