

Supply—Finance

referred to the attitude taken by the minister when he sat on this side of the house in assailing the government for the increase in telephone costs. I am not going to challenge the items which the minister has put on the record, namely, the increase incurred by the board of transport commissioners, the increase in calls because of national defence and the Congo situation, and the increase brought about by the members of parliament in the west block. But, I would have felt a great deal better if he had not mentioned that last item because I think it is a drop in the bucket compared to the tremendous amount that we will have to vote in the main estimate.

I think the minister should tell the committee why it is that a member of parliament who, because of the population in his constituency, or because of the extra work he may have—this is not a reflection on anyone else—feels that he should have a second telephone, is denied that convenience. The minister should also tell us why a member is not entitled to that convenience if he is willing to pay for it himself, and why that policy should not be amended if it is in existence.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I think in the observations of the hon. gentleman it has been overlooked that this is not a matter of government responsibility but a matter concerning the commissioners of internal economy who are the officers, appointed by this house, who deal with matters of this kind.

Mr. Benidickson: You are the senior member of that committee.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask the minister why this does not apply as well to telephone service provided for the members of parliament, to which he has referred?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): That is what I thought we were talking about. I felt this was the point raised by the hon. member for Laurier and the concern of the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River when he asked me about second telephones for members. Am I not right in assuming that was the question he was putting to me?

Mr. Chevrier: Yes.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): This is a matter for the commissioners of internal economy in the last analysis, and our guide has been—

Mr. Chevrier: The minister is quite right in giving the answer which he has, but he gave as an excuse for the increase in this cost the fact that a number of members of parliament required additional telephones, and now, because of the suggestion which was made by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy

[Mr. Chevrier.]

River, he states that it is a matter to be dealt with by the commissioners of internal economy.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The hon. member for Laurier is getting this mixed up. Let me start again. I pointed out the various additional outlays, imposed for various reasons, which account for the fact that we are here now with a supplementary item of \$40,000. The member for Kenora-Rainy River asked why he could not have a second telephone and made some comment about the Sergeant-at-Arms in this respect. I must say that the Sergeant-at-Arms operates under the direction of Mr. Speaker and, in relation to matters of this kind, Mr. Speaker operates in association with the commissioners of internal economy who are members of this house, appointed by this house to consider matters pertaining to the operation of the services of the House of Commons. In this respect, thus far, this view has prevailed. This is not the first time the question has been raised but is a view that has been consistently taken over the years, and I am sure the hon. member for Laurier will recall this. It would not be wise to introduce the practice of allowing members to have their own special lines introduced in the house, or additional lines, because this would eventually lead to some increase in expenditure. It was felt that this is a matter in which all members should be treated alike. This is the view that has prevailed.

Apparently the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River has taken this up with the Sergeant-at-Arms and has taken the Sergeant-at-Arms to task. I must remind him again that the chain of command here would lead the hon. member, if he thinks he has reason to do so, to go to some other level in this respect. The Sergeant-at-Arms is simply operating under instructions that have been given to him.

Mr. Anderson: I should like to make an observation on this point and tell the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River that possibly he is very fortunate to have one telephone and one secretary in this house, because many of the members on the government side have one telephone and one secretary to answer the telephone for two members.

Mr. Benidickson: Just the same as in the opposition.

Mr. Anderson: I think that is not the situation on his side.

Mr. Benidickson: Yes.