

*Report on Miscellaneous Estimates*

that is the extent to which the attempt by the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates to vary the supplementary estimates (B) for 1969-70 is valid and can be accepted by Your Honour and by this House now when we are dealing with the business of supply.

To start with, I suggest that this attempt to legislate by use of an estimate is most improper and should not be permitted.

Even more at fault, however, is the attempt by the committee to vary the original vote in two very material respects. In permitting this, we get away from the very wholesome restraints which the exercise of the legislative process permits us. I am amazed at what has happened here. I do not want to go into it to any extent, but certainly there must be some fault on the part of the Treasury or of the Minister without Portfolio who has been handling the particular item under discussion, namely, vote 17b which appears on page 2 of the supplementary estimates of the Department of Agriculture.

This attempt to short circuit the normal legislative process by legislating by means of a vote is wrong, but it is even more wrong to attempt to vary the result later. However, I will deal with that later since it is a question of substance. Now, I just want to stake out my claim.

What we are faced with now is the fact that the Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates purported to change in two very material respects the original vote 17b in the supplementary estimates of the Department of Agriculture. In the first instance, what was done was to change the category of persons entitled to receive the grants from those who were described as holders of permit books under the Wheat Board Act to people who are producers.

Obviously, we are referring to the Wheat Board Act, but I will not take up the time of the House by quoting from it. However, there is no question that a producer is not necessarily the same as a holder of a permit book under the Wheat Board Act. Obviously, those who hold permit books must be producers, but producers need not necessarily be holders of these permits. The words, "providing for a board of appeal to determine disputes hereunder" were added by the committee to the wording of the vote. These words do not appear in the original vote, and constitute a very substantial alteration of the purposes of the original vote as brought down with the message of His Excellency, and contained in the supplementary estimates. I would suggest

[Mr. Baldwin.]

that under those circumstances there is no question but that this House should not consider the amended vote in the business of supply.

However, Mr. Speaker, because this is a very serious issue I would like to ask very briefly, what are the rights of committees in this regard? I would not ask Your Honour to make a judgment at this time covering what should be the terms and conditions with regard to committees in the future but we must remember, Sir, and I think the House should remember, that we have embarked on a completely new procedure. It could be a very excellent procedure, but we must remember we have taken out from this House the old committee of supply procedure, under which there was the right to have a careful examination of estimates and the ability to move amendments. This right has been taken away, and in the result we have put into the hands of committees the right to deal with these estimates.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what limitation should be placed on these committees, bearing in mind that in the period from 1958 to 1962, some 55, 60 and 65 days were often taken by some of the eminent members of the opposition at that time in their examination of the estimates. Are the committees to be limited to the simple right to say yes or no in dealing with these estimates? Are committees possibly to have the right—this is what I would ask Your Honour to consider because committees are now involved in dealing with these estimates—to add recommendations urging the House to consider what steps can be taken, whether by a humble message to His Excellency or by a simple recommendation, to ask for permission to vary the purpose of votes or to extend the amounts?

I have been in touch with members of various committees who are disturbed over the question of what are and what are not their rights in this regard. I do not expect Your Honour, on this rather narrow point which now confronts you, to make a decision on the wider aspect which I have asked you to consider. However, I hope that during the period of the Easter Recess Your Honour would give some consideration to this, and by a proposal to the Committee on Procedure and Organization, or by a statement in this House, be of some help to the Standing Committees that will be dealing with these estimates after the recess. I shall have something more to say after we get into the actual business of