

*Supplementary Estimates (A)*

before their final passage, in the meanwhile having granted the government interim supply less than 26 days after referring the main estimates to the committees.

Yet due to this exceptional situation in which we now find ourselves these normal limits which had been accepted by the House at the time of a parliamentary reform back in 1968 or 1969, these normal and natural limits provided for by the standing orders do not apply. What we must do now is to try and make sure that the desire expressed by His Excellency the Governor General in the Speech from the Throne be fulfilled. I would refer you to a paragraph in that speech which states, and I quote:

[*English*]

Canadians expect much of this Parliament. The country asks for action and action now. The first task is to clear the accumulation of essential legislation left from previous Parliaments. This backlog must be dispatched expeditiously so that the affairs of the state may be put in good order. To that end, my government is relying on the good will of members and senators of all parties.

[*Translation*]

This was the wish expressed by His Excellency the Governor General and it is in that spirit, Mr. Speaker, that I have opened consultations and negotiations, as I said often in this House in the last two weeks and a half, since the opening of Parliament. I believe that the good faith or good will mentioned by His Excellency the Governor General will be demonstrated in the debate on this motion, if there is one, because I am still waiting for the valuable explanations that will be certainly given by the Progressive Conservative Party so that we can orderly dispose of that backlog to make this Parliament efficient and allow it to study and deal with the real problems facing our country.

So, Mr. Speaker, what this motion says in the spirit of the wish expressed by His Excellency the Governor General in the name of efficiency and to ensure that the rights of the opposition are respected is that we are going to make sure that the two clauses of our standing orders concerning business of supply or related matters will be changed in view of the present circumstances. We are going to change a few dates in S.O. 58 which includes 19 paragraphs and determines the natural time limits that I mentioned earlier. We are going to change those dates so that the Thirty-second Parliament will be able to study the main estimates as well as the supplementary estimate within a reasonable time limit. That time limit shall be at least equal to that provided by the standing orders had they been applicable and I think that you cannot expect more from a government when it is prepared to ask for an order of the House giving the opposition more time to study the main and supplementary estimates than normally provided by the standing orders.

Another advantage of the order requested by the motion would be to give the opposition all allotted days provided by our standing orders for the two supply periods ending December 10, 1980. Let me explain: The supply procedure provides three periods each year for which a certain number of days

called opposition days are allotted which can be used by the opposition parties to consider the estimates or subjects which interest the Canadian Parliament. These three supply periods are as follows: The first goes from March 26 to June 30 and includes 13 days allotted to the opposition. The second period goes from June 30 to December 10 and provides five allotted days for the opposition. The third period extends from December 10 to March 26 and grants seven more allotted days, which makes a grand total of 25 allotted days in a year.

If we look at the period provided in the motion now under consideration, we note that it provides two supply periods and grants to the opposition the total number of allotted days normally provided in these supply periods. In other words, the motion provides 18 allotted days for the opposition parties from now until December 10, while our standing orders normally provide the same number of days for the period between March 26 and December 10. As I said earlier, there are 13 allotted days between March 26 and June 30 and five between June 30 and December 10, which makes a total of 18. We are now at April 28, and as is quite obvious from the motion, we would be willing to grant to the opposition parties the 18 allotted days that would be provided under our rules if today were March 26. In other words, the opposition would have 18 allotted days for a period of about seven months instead of having 18 allotted days for a period of about eight months, which is clearly to the advantage of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to summarize the two advantages provided in this motion. First of all, in a shorter period, the opposition parties would have the same number of allotted days, that is 18, as the number provided by the standing orders between now and December 10, which is a considerable advantage, and second, the main and supplementary estimates could be considered in committee, not only for three months, as provided normally by the standing orders, but for over six months.

We are saying in effect that these estimates will be considered as having been thoroughly studied and will be tabled in the House only on November 10, as opposed to the other deadline which would normally be May 31. Therefore, we have a second advantage: it will be possible for the opposition parties to scrutinize and make a more extensive study of the estimates during a period of time twice as long as is normally provided for in the standing orders.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that the government proposal is very reasonable in allowing Parliament to act efficiently and demonstrate to the Canadian public our desire to work in an orderly fashion to be able to clear this enormous accumulation of legislation left from the previous Parliaments and in the wake of two successive elections in less than one year; but today's order will allow us to be duly efficient without infringing on the rights of the opposition, and without preventing the opposition from making a detailed study of the government's estimates and main expenditures. On the con-