

## THE SENATE

Thursday, March 16, 1950

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Acting Speaker (Hon. J. H. King) in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

### THE ESTIMATES

#### REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

**Hon. Mr. Robertson** moved:

That the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications be authorized to examine the expenditures proposed by the following votes of the estimates laid before parliament for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1951, in advance of the bills based on the said estimates reaching the Senate, namely:

Votes 269 to 274 inclusive,

Votes 459 to 527 inclusive,

Votes 557 to 561 inclusive,

And that the said committee be empowered to send for persons, papers and records.

He said: Honourable senators, what I have to say in asking the house to consider this motion—and it will be very brief—is applicable to the entire series of motions which follow.

I suggest that this house take advantage of the early tabling of the estimates in the other place, by referring them to the various standing committees of the Senate, so that they may be studied and inquired into prior to the arrival of the supply bill based upon them. It is entirely appropriate that we should do so, since the Senate of Canada has undoubtedly the constitutional power to inquire into bills originating in the Commons which appropriate any part of the revenue or impose a tax, and, if it sees fit, to amend them by reducing the amounts therein mentioned. At the same time it has been generally recognized that the Senate has not the right to increase appropriations.

Honourable senators have not only the right but, I believe, the responsibility of inquiring into expenditures proposed by the estimates presented to parliament. It will be recalled that at various times in the past we have attempted to do this, but our efforts in this respect have been handicapped by the fact that ordinarily the estimates are not presented to parliament until after the conclusion of the debate on the Address, and that often this coincided with a flow of legislation which had to be dealt with and thus restricted the time available.

The early publication of the estimates this year facilitates action on our part, and I believe we should take advantage of it. I go further: I believe that if we could organize so that in the future we can conduct a searching and constructively critical examina-

tion of public expenditures, we might thereby render a very useful public service.

The spirit of our approach to this question should, I believe, closely parallel our constitutional powers, in that we should look for possible reductions in governmental expenditures rather than proposed increases. It may well be that in the future, and even today, increases of the sums contemplated would seem to be in the public interest; but I think we should be quite content to leave to others the opportunity of advocating increased expenditures while we concentrate on the problem of how they may be reduced without prejudice to the public interest. I need hardly say that this course is not likely to be popular, since there has developed, particularly in recent years, a situation in which almost every organization or group in Canada while paying lip service to governmental economy in the abstract has been pressing from all angles for ever-increasing government expenditures.

The first problem to be faced is how we can most effectively undertake our examination of proposed governmental expenditures; and this should be the first question to which the various committees should address themselves. It is a very big problem, and to begin with we may be able only to make an approach towards dealing effectively with it. My own personal opinion is that we should not attempt too much, and that the quality of what we do should count more than the quantity.

**Hon. John T. Haig:** Honourable senators, I am not going to object to this motion. As a matter of fact, His Honour the Speaker will recall that during the war years, when he was leader of the other side of the house, this practice was adopted quite often. I hope, however, that if it is again adopted it will not mean that we will rush the various items through in rapid order. That procedure would get us nowhere.

I believe there is a strong feeling across this country that many sides of the operation of the CBC should be looked into. It cannot be contradicted that the CBC is a form of communication that enters right into the family circle. Let me illustrate. I doubt whether any honourable senator listens to the radio more than I do when I am at home. I follow particularly the Sunday radio programs, commencing with the news broadcast at one o'clock in the afternoon. First I listen to the American viewpoint, which lasts for ten minutes. This is followed by a ten-minute British newscast, and then a Canadian commentator concludes the half-hour broadcast. I have no objection to the speakers who give the American and Canadian viewpoints,