

Interim Supply

asked to vote money to pay the expenses incurred by the flag committee, and we have as much right to discuss those expenses and the actions of that committee as we have to discuss the expenditure of any other moneys.

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Chairman, in relation to the question now before us, I believe on more than one occasion during the debate on interim supply members of the cabinet, and particularly the President of the Privy Council, have risen to indicate that the time for opposition members, or members on the government side, to air any grievances they have regarding the conduct of the affairs of this nation is during the debate on interim supply. That being the case, I cannot understand how one could possibly suggest that the hon. member for Bow River has been out of order this afternoon.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, at first glance the thought you expressed seems to carry considerable support. However, one knows what happens with some frequency in the law courts during the course of an argument. A lawyer may find the judge in disagreement with his position, but as he continues to argue his case changes take place in the thinking of the judge. I am sure Your Honour is well aware of that fact, because of your experience. I was very much impressed, as I expect you were, by the argument advanced by one whose experience in parliamentary life has been lengthy. One of the ways by which rules are discussed is by assistance given in interpreting those rules. The hon. member for Victoria-Carleton, former premier of his province, raised a point which I submit is one that deserves Your Honour's fullest consideration.

A committee of parliament is set up for a specific purpose. The committee now under discussion was set up for a specific purpose. It went off to the country and apparently sought strength by looking out at the hills. All these things cost money. Professional witnesses in heraldry and the like were called, and their expenses must be paid. That being so, those expenses are the proper subject of scrutiny by parliament. That is exactly what the hon. member for Bow River was endeavouring to do. He was attempting to ascertain whether those expenditures were in keeping with parliament procedure, and I ask Your Honour to give the fullest possible consideration to this matter so that no one will be able to suggest that parliament does not have the right to examine expenditures, however small they are as compared with larger ones.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I should like to offer a few brief words on this point of order. I think there must be general agreement with the concluding portion of what the Leader of the Opposition has said. I assume that the expenses of the flag committee are covered in the legislative items, or somewhere in an item a portion of which we are now voting. Therefore if one were merely arguing that we have the right to discuss what that committee did, that argument would be difficult to deny.

However, as I understand the situation, Your Honour is not concerned with the fact that an hon. member is discussing what the flag committee did, but rather with the fact that he is discussing something which took place entirely outside the flag committee, indeed outside the house, namely the publication of an article in a newspaper. I did not understand that Your Honour was trying to cut off a discussion about the flag or the flag committee. However, if an offence against the House of Commons has been committed by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra—

Mr. Churchill: Why do you say "if"? Do you not think he has committed an offence?

Mr. Knowles: I certainly think he was stupid. I also found it quite annoying to watch television last night and hear a member of this house state, before a report had been made to the house, that there were certain things in it he would not accept. I suppose the Leader of the Opposition has the right to be arrogant on television and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra has the right to be stupid—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles:—but we also have the right to expect the rules of the house to be observed.

Mr. Woolliams: Do you think there were others involved besides the hon. member?

Mr. Knowles: I doubt it. I do not know, but I think it is the kind of stupid thing that a person does all on his own. But, Mr. Chairman, surely if an offence has been committed against the house, that is for the house to deal with. It is not an offence against the committee of supply. Therefore I submit Your Honour is right in asking the hon. member for Bow River not to bring into the committee of supply the question of what an individual has done which may be an offence against the house.