

further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of that proceeding, and forthwith thereafter put successively, without debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of any item of business relating to interim supply, main estimates, and supplementary or final estimates, the restoration or reinstatement of any item in the estimates, or any opposed item in the estimates, and, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order 72, for the passage at all stages of any bill or bills based thereon.

The procedure that was followed last night in which the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole had to intervene to suggest that the questions being asked were in the nature of debate seems to be well founded on the rules. Let me deal particularly with two questions raised in the questions of privilege put forward. The first is the matter of borrowing authority. The House will recall—as a matter of fact, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) drew attention to this fact—that when the main estimates were being approved during the first part of this session there was an unusual procedure in which a clause dealing with borrowing authority was included in the bill dealing with the Appropriation Act. At that time Your Honour will recall that I said I did not defend the procedure and that I hoped it would not recur.

On this occasion, however, the borrowing authority that was sought was in the bill approving interim supply. I looked at the precedents, and perhaps my hon. friend will be impressed by the fact that this procedure was inaugurated by the Right Hon. R. B. Bennett some 40 years ago and has been followed almost without exception in subsequent appropriation bills, namely, that on interim supply there is usually an extension of the borrowing authority of the government. There was nothing unusual about the procedure. As my colleague the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) said, this is the usual form that has been approved in the past, so he gave the necessary assurance. He also gave the assurance that notwithstanding the fact that interim supply was being asked for and would be approved, there would be an opportunity for the House and standing committees or the committee of the whole to look at the items out of which the interim supply was being extracted.

I say to my hon. friend who raised this question that it would be quite impossible to limit interim supply to exactly three-twelfths of any particular item, because there are occasions when the government finds it necessary to spend the money earlier in the year rather than later.

I do not think, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that there is a valid question of privilege. May I add, as chairman of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, that we have been looking at supply procedures and there is before the House now the report of the standing committee on which I intend to move concurrence early next week. If the hon. gentlemen or anyone else in their party would like to suggest further amendments, they would certainly be welcome to do so, or perhaps one of their spokesmen could raise the same point. So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest there is no question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps it is best to be clear, at first, that there is no serious suggestion of disorder. It seems to me that it was well understood and expressed by both proponents of the alleged questions of privilege that the procedures followed last night and discussed were not out of order. The complaint was not that those procedures

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were irregular. Those procedures conformed with the practices adopted in this House for many years. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) has pointed that out. Instead of being the end of the problem, it is but the beginning.

The complaint is not that the procedure itself was disorderly, but that important powers are accorded to the treasury benches, without parliament being given an opportunity to scrutinize those powers, to limit and restrict them. The difficulty that poses is very real. I am sure it is clear to hon. members that it involves parliament's most fundamental exercise. The solution, since these procedures conform to existing Standing Orders, is not by way of a question of privilege or point of order; neither is it by way of any remedial action by the Chair. The solution lies in the examination of these procedures in the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, which is basically the motion proposed by both proponents.

I find it difficult to accept the matter as questions of privilege. I prefer to reserve any decision, in the hope that in the discussion which will arise next week on the motion for concurrence in the report of the standing committee—the committee has experimented with ways to improve supply procedures—hon. members will be assured that the committee will examine this difficulty which arises every time the House votes supply. What aggravates hon. members' feelings is the focal point of the procedure, when money must be voted. It must be voted without debate and without amendment. The matter must come to a vote some time. As the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) suggested so clearly last night, hon. members must accept the fact that at some time the House must come to a decision and at that moment it must be done without debate or amendment.

The procedures leading up to that point might be usefully examined by the committee, in the hope that arrangements may be made for seeking legitimate information and that the opportunity for members to examine the ingredients of such important bills might somehow be extended, so that crises may be averted, crises which arise when there is no proper opportunity for hon. members to ask questions, particularly about clauses like clause 5, which surfaces for the first time in the supply bill without there having been an opportunity to ask questions.

It seems to the Chair that that procedure might usefully be improved; but the way to do it is not by way of an order of the Chair. The way to do it, surely, is by way of co-operation among House leaders in arranging further discussions in the standing committee.