

It is also, as I am sure you will see as the hon. member goes on, relevant as well to a process which we are going to suggest to the House that might return to the House its right to deal with those estimates in the normal way and in a way that ought to be acceptable to all members.

In order to lay the groundwork for the kind of amendment which we are going to propose, I think it is important that the House and the country understand the magnitude of the estimates, where there are discrepancies in the estimates, so as to lay a proper foundation for the suggestion which the hon. member for St. John's West will be making shortly to permit the House of Commons to examine those estimates.

I do not think it is enough merely to say that there have been discrepancies and therefore we have a right; I think we have to demonstrate those discrepancies. That is precisely what the hon. member is trying to do. To that extent and in that direction I think there is some relevance. I want to assure the Chair that it is not our wish to debate this motion forever.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It never was. I am surprised at the hon. gentleman opposite being so acquiescent with respect to the government. I think it is important, however, that there be some discussion of these estimates because this process is different from any we have ever dealt with before.

It is our intention to move a motion on a procedure which I hope will permit the expeditious handling of these estimates in the House, where they should be handled, and where the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has said many times they ought to be handled. I therefore ask the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to be patient—

Mr. Knowles: That is my middle name!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):—and to view the statement made by the hon. member for St. John's West as laying the groundwork, because of the discrepancies and the statements of the party opposite from when they were in opposition to when they were in government, from when they were in the campaign to today, for demanding something more than is being given to the House if the motion of the President of the Privy Council should carry.

I think those discrepancies are such that we cannot be satisfied with a process that really does not allow examination of those estimates in the House. It is to the groundwork for that motion, which I hope will be commendable to the other side, that the hon. member for St. John's West is directing his remarks.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you will see the drift of this when the motion is put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I want to accept the comments made by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, particularly because he used the word "process". What is before the House is a suggestion for a change in process. It is for that reason that I have asked the hon.

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member for St. John's West to address himself to that process, the subject matter of that process.

The Chair is in the position of saying that there is either no limit because it is under supplementary estimates and a change in the standing orders of the House treating with supplementary estimates and interim supply, or that there still is some limit and some relevance in debate. I do not think hon. members would like me to attempt to make a ruling on that kind of subject.

The hon. member for Nepean-Carleton has made it clear that it is not the intention to stray too far. The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) has received, I hope, the sentiment of the Chair and possibly of some other hon. members as well who are, in fact, asking him to try to stay closer to the subject of the process that is before the House in this motion.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I know it is a very difficult question and I certainly want to be very relevant to this process.

As you know, this motion wants us to deal with interim supply and the supplementary estimates by sending them now to the committee. They will not again be debated in this House so far as we know, but at 15 minutes before the ordinary time of adjournment on May 15 this year the Speaker will interrupt the proceedings, whatever is in progress, and put the question in connection with disposing of the supplementary estimates and interim supply.

● (1710)

This is what is suggested in this motion. I am trying to explain why we do not like and do not accept the process suggested in this motion, because important questions to do with the estimates, to do with the government's economic financial policy, to do with the government's approach to the problem and to do with the whole process of the control of this House of Commons on economic and financial matters have been disregarded in the last two weeks. The motion now before us is a part of this pattern.

What is the pattern? It is this. Monday night a week ago, an economic statement, a budget or a quasi-budget—call it what you like—was bootlegged into the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. That was the start of the government's treating us with contempt on this side and trying to ride roughshod over us on very important financial and economic matters.

The process then continued on Tuesday with the estimates being tabled by the President of the Treasury Board who would not stand properly behind them and who could not explain discrepancies between his estimates and statements made by the Minister of Finance the night before.

Then the process continued during the week with a contemptuous refusal by ministers to explain how they were going to save \$1 billion in the estimates presented to the House on Tuesday which the Minister of Finance had spoken about on