

Interim Supply

I hold now. There may be general references to the administration but I do not believe that the motion itself or the amendment refers to any specific item which would permit the discussion of any specific problem in detail.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): As I understand it, and I am just asking for clarification, you take the position that we should not refer to any particular department. While I am asking that, this very suggestion is being followed so that we could do, in a few minutes, what I am sure if we had done an hour ago would have brought progress in this debate. The Minister of Finance, however, in his great love for the rights of parliament and free discussion, has prevented us from discussing at this time perhaps the most important domestic problem in our country. I regret that the Minister of Finance, who himself took this method, should seek to deny to another hon. member in this house the opportunity of discussing something which not only affects his policies and the policies of this government, something that is very vital to thousands of people in this country who will watch the attitude of the government in breaching our right to discuss this matter.

The hon. gentleman talks about the rights of parliament, talks about closure. We have it today.

The Chairman: I think the hon. gentleman did not want to speak in those terms because I am sure, indirectly, his comments were a reflection on the Chair. The Chair seeks only to apply the rules as they are and to interpret them. I do not believe the remarks of the hon. member for Essex East should be left there. I am sure he will wish to make it clear that he did not intend any reflection on the Chair.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I want to say, since you are asking me for comment, that in a matter so important as this we, as private members in the opposition, have a right to take a course within the rules of this house which we regard as essential for the preservation of free discussion in this house.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Within the rules.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If there seemed to be any reflection on the Chair, it was never intended. What I am seeking to do is to establish that the Minister of Finance, by the course he has taken today—

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Someone says "Order". My hon. friend from Wetaskiwin says "Order", and only because it is he I will make no comment. However, I will

say to the Minister of Finance that the reason we are discussing this matter today lies in the policies of the government of which he is the Minister of Finance. There was no reflection on the Chair. It is a reflection on the administration which is rapidly losing the confidence of parliament.

Mr. Argue: The motion before the committee is one to reduce the item that is requested by way of supply by some \$10,000. This item does not relate to the Department of Labour specifically; it does not relate specifically to any of the departments of government but, as an initial move at this time, I would think that this is a good way of protesting the general attitude and policies of this government. This motion does not highlight the question of unemployment which is an important issue in Canada today and with which the government refuses to come to grips. We are prepared to support the motion asking for a reduction of the item by \$10,000 because this is a well known method by which members of the opposition can protect the policies and attitudes of the government. I would think that the government would be interested in expediting, within the framework of free discussion, the business of the house. However, the intransigent attitude of the Minister of Finance in refusing to allow members to discuss this item fully is not going to assist in the progress of the business of the house but will merely serve to slow the progress and the efficient conduct of parliamentary business.

This \$10,000 reduction is, in fact, a much more serious motion, I suggest, than one that might have related merely to the Department of Labour. This is a suggestion that the general policies of the government are a total failure, that the government has failed to keep faith with the Canadian public, that it is refusing to deal with burning public questions. Instead of the minister coming here and being prepared to discuss in a frank way the policies of the government, he has attempted to use points of order as a smoke-screen for a policy that is a complete flop.

This hon. member for Essex East has said that progressively this government is losing the confidence of parliament, the confidence of the people of Canada. I do not believe that in the history of this country a government has ever lost prestige and support more rapidly than has this administration. This government is prepared to play loose with the rules of parliament. This is most inadvisable on the part of the Minister of Finance, who has introduced this item, when he has clothed himself with such glory, and quite rightly so, even to wrapping himself in the