

Minister agrees that it would be unthinkable for the government to go to the country without presenting a budget.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I have already discussed these matters with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). They are under consideration, and the additional views of the hon. member, which seem to be in the direction of putting off an election as long as possible, will be considered.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend, as he often does, has misinterpreted what I said. The election can come as soon as the government will bring it on. My point was there should be a budget before there is an election.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, it is very entertaining to see the old hands of the House play around with the procedure! In any case, in his initial answer to the House leader of the opposition, the President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) mentioned a number of bills which will necessarily have to be studied and possibly agreed to by the House, and many sittings will be required to do this. I would not want, either to be indiscreet, Mr. Speaker, about the conversation I had with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) during the sitting, to the full knowledge of everybody. We were not hiding away, Mr. Speaker, that took place right here.

Anyway, to come back seriously to the proceedings of the House, I should like to ask the President of Privy Council whether it will actually be possible to deal with these bills in a normal way. I am prepared, as well as my colleagues, to give my support so that parliament and the administration of our country will operate normally. However, it is only normal for us to obtain a guarantee from the President of the Privy Council that he will give us the opportunity to work within normal delays, notwithstanding the holding of a general election. Naturally, we are ready to face a general election when the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) decides to hold one, but let us forget that for now and let us work so as to govern our country in the best possible way. Having said that, I should like the President of Privy Council to state clearly if all the bills he mentioned a moment ago will be dealt with in a normal way, so that we can discuss them normally and adopt them for what they are worth.

● (1512)

[English]

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has introduced a caveat into his question which I accept, namely the possibility of an election. Apart from that, legislation will be dealt with in the normal way.

Mr. McGrath: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, in September, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) promised legislation dealing with a separate Department of Fisheries. That is a very important matter and, in the Atlantic provinces, a

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matter of some priority. Last Monday in the House the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) indicated there would be legislation setting up a separate Department of Fisheries and that this was a matter of some priority. May I ask the government House leader if we can expect this legislation amending the Government Organization Act to set up a Department of Fisheries either before the House is dissolved or a summer recess, whichever comes first.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, we place a high priority on this legislation. I am glad the hon. member has mentioned it. We will introduce it just as soon as possible and deal with it just as quickly as hon. members wish, which I believe will be very quick indeed.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, there is one question regarding the order of business following immediately. My friend mentioned his intention to call Bill C-26, followed by Bill C-21. Would he consent to reversing that order and calling Bill C-21 first? I can say to him the debate will be very short indeed and we can dispose of it as soon as it is out.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-21, I gather, is the Transfer of Offenders Act. I believe that will be satisfactory.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

MANAGEMENT AND MEMBERS' SERVICES

Fourth report of Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services—Mr. Coates.

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Second report of Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs—Mrs. Holt.

[Editor's Note: For texts of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[Translation]

ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF CANADA

TABLING OF A LETTER TO DR. SYLVIA OSTRY

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. President, pursuant to Standing Order 41, I would like to table in the two official languages a letter I sent to Dr. Sylvia Ostry, Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada.

[English]

This letter requests that the Economic Council take on certain responsibilities for analysis of inflation and productivi-