

Inquiries of the Ministry

leader. Eight days ago I asked the minister if consideration was being given by him to the report of the Special Committee on Election Expenses and whether new legislation was being prepared. He has had eight days to ruminate on the matter. Can he now advise the House if legislation is being prepared and whether it will be presented in this or the next session?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as a government we are concerned about the question of election expenses. We did refer the matter to a committee for study and its report was received toward the close of the earlier part of the session. We are now considering that report. We will advance the matter as quickly as we can but, as the hon. member will appreciate from looking at the present list of legislation on the order paper, it is improbable that we can deal with it in this session. It is even more improbable that we would have time to deal with election expenses in this session. I can hardly make a firm statement at the moment as to what will happen in the next session.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact that the report has been in the hands of the minister since June 3, almost four months, and in view of the position taken not only by him but by the Prime Minister and members of all parties in the House on this matter, can he assure us he will make representations to the Prime Minister and his colleagues that legislation be brought forward during this Parliament?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, we are all at one in our interest in promoting this matter. I hope we can have that legislation during this Parliament. That is our objective.

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FISHERIES**DATE OF ATLANTIC AREA CONSERVATION CONFERENCE**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Is the Minister of Fisheries now in a position to give the time and date of the conference on conservation of our fisheries resources in the Atlantic area and does he propose to extend an invitation to Members of Parliament from the Atlantic provinces to attend and participate?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, 10:30 a.m. on October 8 in the West Block. The hon. member will be invited.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I would have raised this matter a moment or two earlier except for Your Honour's interjection with regard to the length of the question period. In any event, I have risen at the earliest opportunity.

My question of privilege relates to the answer of the Prime Minister a moment ago on the question of youth employment. Either *Hansard* for last week is inaccurate or the Prime Minister's story has been completely altered since that time. Last week the Prime Minister informed the House that the government was going to look very seriously into the high proportion of youth unemploy-

[Mr. Benjamin.]

ment. This afternoon the Prime Minister indicated that they were doing nothing whatsoever except continuing the usual program that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration indicated in his answer to the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville. Possibly the Prime Minister could take this opportunity to correct the record.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

Mr. Lundrigan: On a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: I apologize to hon. members. The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege relates to the general business of the question period. Although I am not in a position to offer wise commentary such as my esteemed colleagues did who took part in the debate yesterday, I would like hon. members to listen for a few minutes while I present a position which should be of assistance to all hon. members.

My question of privilege does not arise out of any personal frustration with regard to the question period. It is about the only vehicle left for members of the opposition to hold the government accountable for its behaviour and actions from day to day, bearing in mind what has happened to the estimates and the redirection of the legislative process in recent years.

Despite the wisdom and great competency of Your Honour in being able to recognize members, when looking to my left a few minutes ago I counted 20 members who were unable to ask questions. I know there were many members who, like myself, did not seek the floor today because they felt it would be imposing on the rights of other members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lundrigan: The hon. member for Vegreville could not pursue the matter he raised by asking supplementaries even though the minister who would answer was in the House for the first time in many days. The fact that he could not develop his urgent point will lead to frustration on the part of 2,000 native people in his constituency.

The general state of the economy occupies a good part of the question period. I did a good deal of research on the question period from the opening of the House on September 7 until yesterday. I discovered that 197 questions had been asked about the economy. This is an indication of the great concern which the opposition feels about unemployment and various other matters of this type and importance. Because of the discretion which must be exercised by the Chair in determining questions that can be asked and the 40 minute time limit, frequently opposition members are not permitted to pursue very important supplementaries, especially supplementaries that pertain to the critical state of affairs in the country today.

On this basis House leaders, in co-operation with the Chair, must reassess the length of the question period which is now of 40 minutes duration. It must be reassessed because the matters which the country will be facing this winter will be of great importance and the country will be robbed of the right to have these matters