

Question of Privilege

not think there is any need to take up further time of the house. My suggestion is that we sit tonight from 8 until 10, and I hope this will be the consensus of the house. I may assure my right hon. friend that if there is any thought of lack of co-operation in his mind, there is no intention of it. We want to see whether we can agree in this house this afternoon on the procedure and the time we propose to take today on the discussion of the business before us. I have made my suggestion, and I hope it will meet the wishes of my right hon. friend and those who sit behind him.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, we have always desired to co-operate—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The degree of agreement is apparent from that response. I appreciate the approval that statement has received from the government side of the house. However, I would point out this, that the government has not come clean with parliament at all. They brought us back here, although there is no objection to that whatever because the business has to be done. But they concealed the facts regarding the unemployment insurance fund and now find themselves in a difficult position.

Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I think it is about time the right hon. gentleman began to observe some of the proprieties of the House of Commons. There was no concealment whatever. On March 6 the supplementary estimates tabled in this house indicated the necessity for replenishing the fund, so there was no concealment whatever.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Everybody realizes there was an indication in the estimates and also in the supplementaries, so why did the government not go ahead instead of allowing the time of the house to be used for other purposes? They thought they could push us into a position where we would not look into this matter carefully. This is what they tried to do. As a matter of fact I am informed that they had available as of last night some \$15 million unused, and all that was required was an order in council before the end of the year.

Mr. MacEachen: I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Will the hon. gentleman allow me to continue? I have the floor.

Mr. MacEachen: I rise on a point of order. The right hon. gentleman is debating the merits of this particular matter on orders of the day, or on motions. We will have an opportunity of dealing with the merits of

this question later when the item is called. In the meantime I would ask the Chair to ask the right hon. gentleman to observe the rules that every hon. member has to observe.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I know the facts hurt the hon. gentleman, and that is why he jumps up on imaginary points of order. The position of the fund is directly attributable to the bungling administration of this government. I want to make that very clear.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the right hon. gentleman feels very keenly about the position he takes on this matter. I am sure, however, he will agree with me that at this particular moment, in this phase of our discussion, it is not in order to discuss a matter of substance. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre showed forbearance in that regard. If we were to permit or if Your Honour were to permit a general discussion of this subject, it would mean that all hon. members would have a right at this moment, before the item has been reached, to discuss it.

We will have an opportunity of discussing it. The Minister of Labour will be very anxious to deal with this matter. I am sure the right hon. gentleman will agree that we want to regularize this discussion, and I suggest it is not in order at this time to discuss the merits of the question. We should wait until we reach this item, and we will arrange that that be done today. We will have an opportunity to discuss it, particularly as we may meet tonight between the hours of eight and ten.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I was not speaking on the merits of the proposition, I was speaking about the demerits of the government. I want to make that very clear. They are asking that the house sit extra hours, and to that we have no objection. I am simply pointing out the fact that what has happened is another result of the bungling attitude of this government and the hiding of the facts by the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Speaker: I do not wish to cut off any hon. member who wishes to make a contribution, but it seems to me fairly clear, if I understand the situation correctly, that the Acting Prime Minister has moved—

Mr. Pickersgill: Suggested.

Mr. Speaker:—suggested that this house do sit from eight o'clock until ten o'clock this evening, and that is the matter under discussion.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): I take it that this is a motion which the Acting Prime Minister has moved and is therefore debatable.