

Business of the House

we feel that the most important aspect of this whole business as far as genuine democracy is concerned is reform of the means by which elections are paid for—there is another word I might have used as well as “paid for”, but I will let it go at that today. So I urge that serious consideration be given to referring these matters to two committees, one to take care of the technical considerations, such as new methods of preparing the lists, and other details, and another to which the whole question of election expenses would be assigned so that we might see action on this issue in the present parliament well in advance of the next election.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to comment briefly on the ideas put forward by the previous speakers and related to the proposals of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald) to the effect that an agenda should be drawn up and submitted to the committee on privileges and elections, with a view to amending the Canada Elections Act.

The reforms proposed for submission to the committee are overdue. As a matter of fact, the Ralliement Cr ditiste complained on various occasions about some anomalies they have had to endure at election time. We deplored, for instance, the fact that the electoral machine was under the control of the party in power.

The proposals made today will be looked into by the committee which will then report to the house. Its study will deal with new ways of drawing up lists of electors and setting up election expenditures.

Many changes could be brought about in this last area. Until now, the election expenditures of the old political parties simply cannot be compared to those of the new parties, which have to compete with electoral machinery pretty well off from a financial standpoint. Technically speaking, the electoral machinery is under the sole control of the party in power. As to the proposals relating to the reduction of election expenditures, they are suggestions which I believe to be worthwhile but which have been made much too late. However, we must accept them and recommend to the house and to the President of the Privy Council to consider, during the Easter recess, an agenda that could be submitted to the committee on privileges and elections in order that new procedures can be adopted and carried out during the next election campaign.

29180—466½

• (2:40 p.m.)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS****MOTION TO TRANSFER TO GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): I rise to make a suggestion with regard to the motion outstanding in the name of my colleague, the hon. member for LaSalle. If called now, the debate would proceed. I suggest a special order be made to have this transferred to government orders and called as the first item under government orders. In this way we can proceed right away with the oral question period. Perhaps this might be agreeable to the house. I move:

That the motion in the name of Mr. Lessard (LaSalle) be transferred to Government Orders and considered as the first order of business this day under Government Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Mr. Baldwin: We are agreeable to accepting that. The minister might be prepared to accept the motion and we will not have to debate it.

Mr. Speaker: Is the motion agreed to?

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**DOMINION-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS****REQUEST BY NEW BRUNSWICK FOR CONFERENCE ON FINANCE**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to ask the Prime Minister whether he will tell the house what reply he is making to the request of Premier Robichaud of New Brunswick for an “immediate and urgent” federal-provincial conference on finances?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I was just given notice of this telegram a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker. I have not considered the reply as yet. There was a federal-provincial meeting of ministers of finance in December. I am sure Premier Robichaud would not want a repetition of that meeting. We want to have a meeting with the provinces in which the provincial governments would be willing to co-operate with us to