

The Budget—Mr. Gray

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is the understanding of the Chair that the minister said he would answer questions at the conclusion of his speech.

Mr. Gray: These interruptions by the hon. member and his friends indicate that I may be saying things they do not want to hear.

Mr. Lundrigan: My point of order is twofold. First, the minister has not told me that he would not accept my question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lundrigan: Perhaps hon. members would wait until I have finished raising my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. member has a point of order I would like him to state it immediately.

Mr. Lundrigan: During the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Finance was very touched by my hon. friend's statements. He interrupted eight or ten times and his questions were accepted. I should like to know whether we can ask certain questions—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is the understanding of the Chair that it is the prerogative of each member who has the floor to indicate whether or not he will accept questions during the course of his speech, or deal with them at the end of his speech as the case may be. I gather the minister said that at the conclusion of his speech he would accept questions if he had time.

Mr. Gray: I should like to say, if only to make sure that the hon. member does not feel he was ignored on his spurious point of order, that if he remains until the end of my remarks I shall be happy to answer questions from him. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out this afternoon, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Manpower and Immigration have disclosed that in January unemployment on a seasonally adjusted basis fell to 6.2 per cent from 6.6 per cent in December. This is the sharpest drop in unemployment that has taken place in the last year, and is substantially below the 6.9 per cent recorded last September.

● (9:00 p.m.)

I invite hon. members to contrast this very encouraging improvement in the Canadian employment situation during the very first month of 1971 with the gloomy prediction made a few days ago by the leader of the Conservative party that there would be no appreciable improvement in the situation throughout the course of the whole year. Perhaps this is the kind of judgment that he must have applied when attempting to guide the affairs of the province of Nova Scotia, but I will not comment upon that. Contrast this—

Mr. Lundrigan: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate.

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, the minister, this acting, imitating or impressionable finance observer, is not entitled to present to the House—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. With respect to the hon. member, I do not think he has a question of privilege. He may have a matter for debate, but the Chair has recognized the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Gray).

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Some hon. Members: Throw him out.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. member has a question of privilege I will hear it.

Mr. Lundrigan: I have a serious question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that in 1970, 1969 and back to 1954 there was a computational method used by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics which allowed us to compare the seasonally adjusted figure for one month with months of previous years. In January, 1971—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must inform the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate that that is not a question of privilege. It may be a point for argument, but the Chair has recognized the minister and he has the floor. If there is an opportunity in the debate—and I doubt that there will be—the hon. member might make his argument, but he cannot make it during the time allotted to the minister.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of National Revenue has the floor.

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker—

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member rising on a question of privilege?

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege.

Today is the last day of debate on the budget, and the Ralliement créditiste has not yet had the opportunity to express its point of view. Now, I should like to—

An hon. Member: You have not been here all day.

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Speaker, we have been present in the House all day.

I notice that the Conservative member is trying unduly to hold up the business of the House precisely to prevent the Ralliement Créditiste from expressing their views on the budget.