

Absence of Minister from House

Mr. Stanfield: It is a violation of the privileges of the House and its members. I hope the Prime Minister will make it very apparent to the minister that not only is he permitted to come into the House today but that the Prime Minister would like him here to answer these questions.

Mr. Speaker: Is the Prime Minister rising on the question of privilege?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege. I wish to indicate that the House knows perfectly well there is no violation of privilege in this instance. If there were, I would like to hear a quotation from the rules as to what privilege was violated.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: You would ignore them if we cited them to you.

Mr. Trudeau: I see that they have no arguments, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I rise on the same point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair is required to make a ruling before there could be a debate on a question of privilege. The Chair should indicate now whether there is a prima facie case of privilege. There might have been a point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition, but I think hon. members will appreciate this is not essentially a question of privilege and the matter cannot be debated or considered by the House on such basis.

Mr. Lewis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is a pity that the Prime Minister found it necessary to sit down before he completed his remarks because, regardless of whether or not there is a specific rule to which Your Honour or anyone else may point, there are moral rules in this Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: There is a moral obligation on the minister who has met with the heads of the corporation in light of serious lay-offs and has a statement to make. If he has called a press conference, presumably he has something to say. There is a moral obligation on him to say it to this House and let hon. members find out from him exactly what was done. I suggest that when the Prime Minister seeks to hide behind technicalities as to whether a rule can be cited, it is merely further evidence of the contempt in which this House is held by him.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Leader of the New Democratic Party that it is a shame I was not permitted to complete my answer because I think I had a very rational explanation to put to the House. However, it is not my habit to try to speak above shouting such as was then apparent among members of the opposition. If they are not interested in eliciting information—

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: Stop being so pompous, Pierre.

Mr. Trudeau: You see how it is, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Get out of the kindergarten.

Mr. Drury: This is a kindergarten, all right.

An hon. Member: You are worse than MacInnis.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I cannot be that bad. I am sure that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce will be giving an explanation to the press when he meets them and which the House is apparently not prepared to hear.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Broadbent: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I regret that the Prime Minister has not decided to assure the House that the minister is going to make a statement to the House rather than to the press. I have been informed that spokesmen for General Motors told the press that the minister would be making a statement and they refused to comment. I think the least the minister can do is to make that statement to the House.

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INDUSTRY

REPORT BY MINISTER ON MEETING WITH GENERAL MOTORS CONCERNING LAY-OFFS—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave under Standing Order 43 to present a motion to the House. Seconded by the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), I move:

That this House requests that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce appear in the House today to report on his meetings with officers of General Motors.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member requires unanimous consent. Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimous consent and the motion cannot be put.

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GRAIN

IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSITIONAL PAYMENT TO FARMERS—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave under Standing Order 43 to present a motion of pressing and urgent necessity. Seconded by the hon.