

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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**Tuesday, November 15, 1966**

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

### PRIVILEGE

#### MR. BENSON—CLARIFICATION OF STATEMENT IN DEBATE RESPECTING TRANSFER OF FUNDS

**Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of National Revenue and President of the Treasury Board):** I should like to make a clarification of what I said yesterday as reported on page 9840 of *Hansard*, having to do with the Auditor General's request for funds to supplement his vote from finance vote No. 15 "Contingencies".

I find that the request referred to, which is contained in a letter from the Auditor General's office dated October 19, was for "an amount of \$29,800 now requested for the month of November, 1966 to recoup our salary allotment". While no specific reference was made to the mid-November payroll, the request covered a number of salary items up to and including November 30.

Subsequently a check with the office of the Comptroller of the Treasury revealed that the full amount required was \$53,000 and accordingly this amount was released by Treasury Board authority dated November 10 from finance vote No. 15, "Contingencies".

● (2:40 p.m.)

I would also like to state, Mr. Speaker, that at the appropriate moment I intend to table the legal opinion we received with respect to using funds from this particular vote.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Retreat, retreat and alibi.

**Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is making this statement on motions and it seems to me he should instead enter into the debate this afternoon and give us a proper chance to reply adequately. May I not reply now?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. My understanding is that the minister wanted to make a statement on privileges and I assume that there would be nothing wrong with the minister, if he wished, repeating the statement, when we enter the debate later on this afternoon.

**Mr. Churchill:** If this is a matter of privilege may we not comment on it? Otherwise, what is this procedure?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. gentleman is correct. The minister is making the statement on privilege, and certainly the hon. member would be entitled to comment.

**Mr. Churchill:** I thought that was the situation and I was surprised the minister would do it in this manner instead of during the course of the debate which may go on this afternoon. We now have disclosed to the house an emendation, a correction—

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Another retreat.

**Mr. Churchill:** Yes, another retreat, another correction—of the statement the minister made yesterday.

I pointed out yesterday in the course of debate that the minister was trying to create the impression that the Auditor General was in accord with everything he was doing. The minister then said that the Auditor General had asked for a certain amount of money, the sum of \$53,000. The whole statement of the minister yesterday was obviously incorrect and this reinforces the suggestion I made yesterday for a full consideration of this matter, this peculiar financial transaction, by an appropriate committee of the house operating with the Auditor General, so that the house and the public at large will know exactly what was done in last week's computer exercise by the Minister of National Revenue and his colleagues.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Still licking their wounds.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. In view of the fact that the matter was raised by way of privilege I would say I think there is no prima facie case of privilege.

### FINANCE

#### TABLING OF LEGAL OPINION RESPECTING SUPPLY ALLOCATIONS

**Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of National Revenue and President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the house I would like to table a legal opinion