

Inquiries of the Ministry

speeches today would not deal with the matter, although perhaps not along the lines of the suggestion made by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell). But as he knows, as soon as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) has made his speech, he will be given the floor as is customary—

Mr. Coldwell: After the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Yes; after the Prime Minister. Then the leader of the C.C.F. party will be given the floor. I have always had certain difficulty with respect to this standing order 26 especially when the matter mentioned under it obviously is of urgent public importance. Not only in this case but in many others hon. members have moved a motion of importance similar to this one; and when I have had to decide whether there is urgency of debate it has been customary for me—and not only for me but for my predecessors ever since the standing order has existed—not to grant the motion when there is opportunity for a debate involving great latitude such as that on the address in reply, the budget debate or a motion to go into supply. The matter presents difficulty. As I told hon. members last year, I have been studying the matter and the Clerk and I have had discussions about it. I should not like to be called upon today to change the practice which has been so consistently followed in the past. I am still considering the matter. As I say, it presents difficulties. I should like the house to bear with me at this moment. I would ask the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart to understand that I do not at the moment wish to change the practice which has been so consistently followed in the past. I shall give the matter some further thought. I do not say that he should not be permitted to make his motion again. I do not make any commitments but I would say that unless opportunity of discussion not only of the various matters mentioned in the speech from the throne but of this matter of urgency as well is given in the debate on the address in reply—if it is skipped for a day or two and not enough opportunities have been given for the house to express their views—I should be inclined to go along with the hon. member. I therefore do not accept the motion.

[Later:]

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Irvin Studer (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour to this effect. Have any arrangements or agreements been made to provide the necessities of

life, food, fuel, and so forth, to those areas suffering a shortage owing to the railway strike?

Hon. Milton F. Gregg (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, no agreements have been made to that effect, but in discussions with the two parties concerned those matters were discussed and I have already brought instances of pending hardship to their attention. If there are any that my hon. friend has in mind I would be glad to do what I can to bring them to the attention of both parties.

FINANCE**REQUEST FOR REDUCTION OF TAX
ON AUTOMOBILES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Finance. Is the minister giving consideration to a further reduction of excise tax on automobiles manufactured in Canada?

Hon. W. E. Harris (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could remember the precise answer I made to the same question asked by the same member about a year ago. All I can say is that we consider everything.

THE BUDGET**INQUIRY AS TO PROBABLE DATE OF PRESENTATION**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Michael Starr (Ontario): In order that automobile dealers may arrange their car inventories, can the minister advise when he expects to bring down the budget?

Hon. W. E. Harris (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker, it has been customary to give sometimes one week's and sometimes two weeks' notice of that date, but I am not in a position to give a date at the present time.

POWER**COLUMBIA RIVER—INQUIRY AS TO DISCUSSIONS
WITH UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Can the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources tell the house when conversations between representatives of the government of Canada and the government of the United States with respect to problems concerning the development of the Columbia and other international rivers will commence?

Hon. Jean Lesage (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources): No definite date has been set as yet.