

Proposals Respecting Wage Restraints

Speaker, that I am resolved to do it in what is sometimes referred to as a low key. Nevertheless, I feel that this is a very serious matter.

I draw Your Honour's attention first of all to words from May, which you have frequently drawn to our attention, as to the true meaning of parliamentary privileges which according to May, it is as follows:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each house collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions—

I contend, Mr. Speaker, that one of the rights without which we cannot discharge our functions in this House of Commons is the right not to be misled, the right when government statements are made to us to believe that they are true. If that situation does not obtain, not only are we prevented from the proper discharge of our functions but this House can well fall apart.

Sir, because I seriously ask you to find that I have a prima facie case of privilege I wish to make it clear that I am not alleging that there was a deliberate misleading of the House, and accordingly I am not asking you to find that there was deliberate misleading of the House last week. But I do assert, and I ask you to find, that what went on last week raises some very serious questions that ought to be gone into by a standing committee of the House.

The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has already referred to a number of days on which questions were asked and answers were given. In order to pinpoint the matter I am content to confine my references to Tuesday, June 2, and Thursday, June 4. On Tuesday, June 2, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), after having asked about wage restraints, asked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) if it was the government's intention to cover the entire field of other incomes, "particularly profits, interest, rents and prices." The minister's reply was:

I had not thought of making that request of the provinces.

When newspaper reports persisted that something like this was going to happen at Winnipeg on Friday my leader, the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands, raised the matter again on Thursday, directing his questions to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister gave us various statements which made it clear that in his view what the Minister of Finance had said on Tuesday was

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

correct, that the government had no thoughts along these lines.

An hon. Member: What page?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): When the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands pressed the matter with the Prime Minister, as reported at page 7714 the reply was:

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member would save a lot of his time and the time of the House if he were to take the word of the Minister of Finance against that of a canard.

An hon. Member: What a word!

Mr. Trudeau: "Imposition of wage controls"—read the question.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have done a lot of reading over the weekend. I am quite prepared to become a member of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for the purpose of this reference where we can go into the matter in full. The whole impression given to us was that the government had no thought of going to Winnipeg with proposals for wage restraints, wage controls, guidelines, or what have you. Hon. members are aware of the fact that even as late as Friday afternoon at least one Ottawa paper was still reporting that the Prime Minister had said this would not happen—

Mr. Trudeau: I did not.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh—touchy, touchy!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I said that at least one Ottawa newspaper was still reporting that the Prime Minister was saying this would not happen. The Press Gallery was only doing what we were doing, believing the answers we were getting from the government side of the House. Yet at Winnipeg a program of wage restraints or controls was announced.

I know, Mr. Speaker, before anybody mentions it, that it was announced in the form of an appeal from Dr. Young, the Chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission. I know it will be argued that this was not an announcement of government policy. But this is a fiction that it is getting pretty hard for any of us to believe. I draw attention to the fact that in a report in the *Saturday Globe and Mail* by David Crane from Winnipeg there are several references to Finance Minister E. J.