

Inquiries of the Ministry

position to carry it into effect, following the course that has been followed in the past, a contract embodying the terms must be signed and completed, and that has not been done, for discussions have continued intermittently over the last two years with respect thereto. Under the circumstances I spoke at length in this regard in my opening statement.

Mr. Argue: I wonder whether the Prime Minister would say whether it is the intention of the government to hold the United Kingdom government to their commitment to purchase the 24 million pounds of uranium, or is Canada going to let it off the hook?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not think the United Kingdom government, in its experience, has ever asked to be let off the hook.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting the rights and privileges of every hon. member of this house. My question of privilege has regard to what we have seen today, a shocking abuse of the rules of this house. The Prime Minister has—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. member has a question of privilege he should be specific. If he will specifically indicate what the breach of privilege is it will be considered.

Mr. Hellyer: If you will hear me out, Mr. Speaker, I will state it clearly. The Prime Minister, in flagrant disregard of the rules of this house, chose not to make a statement on motions as is the custom with statements of this importance, but chose rather to introduce it at another time on questions before the orders of the day.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the hon. member, if he reconsiders what has transpired, will find that he has not risen to a point of order at the time it was relevant to do so, when he could have been heard, but at a point after the course has been set by the house itself. I see no question of privilege.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked the house for unanimous consent and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Justice): I think there is a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of the assertion made by the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) who saw fit to criticize the conduct of the Prime Minister in this regard. May I remind Your Honour that the house, including the hon. member for Trinity, gave unanimous leave regarding the course followed by the Prime

Minister and now, like a lot of spoiled children, hon. members opposite are seeking to withdraw their leave after the event. This amounts to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I rather think the hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Fulton) is attempting to speak to a question of privilege which I have found not to exist.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted to ask leave of the house to—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, I have heard the hon. member and I have given—

Mr. Hellyer: You have not heard the point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have been present in the house and have come to the conclusion that if there was a question of privilege the hon. member is too late in raising it now.

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): I would like to ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Prime Minister tell us the date on which this firm commitment, or firm contract—whichever terminology he used—was made?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the period of time during which there were letters passing back and forth. The hon. member will be able to ask that tomorrow, when I think the committee is meeting, and will be able to secure a full answer in that regard.

Mr. McIlraith: Is the Prime Minister able to tell me the precise date on which the commitment itself was made?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that when the president of Eldorado appears before the committee that will be a proper question to ask him.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question of the Prime Minister. When did the Prime Minister personally first learn of this contract?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I learned of the negotiations that were taking place at the time they commenced to take place.

Mr. Pearson: May I ask the Prime Minister whether he has any comment to make on the statement made by the president of the Eldorado Mining and Refining Company to the effect that there had been no indication that this 24-million pound contract with the United Kingdom government would be—

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.