

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Benson: As I have stated, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement concerning this matter on interim supply. I can assure my right hon. friend that the amount was determined on Thursday last.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary question may I ask the President of the Treasury Board whether the government will table any orders in council, treasury board minutes or exchanges of correspondence dealing with any transfers of moneys that were made?

Mr. Benson: I am not sure, personally, of the propriety of tabling such documents. However, I should indicate to the house that these documents have been made available to the Auditor General, and the transfers that were made were from vote 15 contingencies. I should point out to the house that not only did we have the opinion of the law officers of the crown in this regard, but as a matter of fact we had an application from the Auditor General for a transfer of \$53,000 to meet his mid-month payrolls from this particular account.

Mr. Knowles: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If the transfers were made by orders in council or by treasury board minutes—

Some hon. Members: "If".

Mr. Knowles: —is the government not required either to table those documents or to exempt them from publication?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest to the hon. member that his question is hypothetical and argumentative.

Mr. Diefenbaker: If I may rise on a question of privilege, this is a matter that affects the privileges of parliament. All last week we were browbeaten and bamboozled by a government that pretended that the civil servants were going to be without money.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This government tried to use the civil servant as an instrument to force parliament to bend to its will.

Mr. Teillet: That is exactly what you did.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is a very serious digression from parliamentary rights and is certainly not something that can be brushed aside as being argumentative or hypothetical.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I should like to bring to the attention of the right hon. Leader of the Opposition that it was not brushed aside. The opinion given by the Chair was that the question as asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was hypothetical and argumentative. Certainly there was no suggestion by the Chair that the matter should be brushed aside.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question of the Prime Minister. Regardless of the legal niceties or the merits, all of which can be argued later, in view of this further example of the erosion of parliamentary control over the executive does not the Prime Minister honestly feel that this whole matter of parliament vis-à-vis the executive should be the subject now of an earnest and anxious inquiry either by this house or a committee of the house?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that when my hon. friend the Minister of National Revenue makes his statement on interim supply very shortly, the hon. gentleman's fears in this regard will be removed.

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, I should like to pose a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Did the Minister of National Revenue not advise him last Wednesday that he had found sufficient funds to make the mid-month payment to civil servants?

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker. These questions which are being raised as a matter of argument can be asked on interim supply, which in a few minutes will be debated for the eleventh day.

Mr. Hees: A supplementary question to the Minister of National Revenue. Did he not advise the Prime Minister last Wednesday that sufficient funds had been found to make this payment?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: He did on Wednesday, and he knows it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Revenue which may clear the matter up. When he received this advice from