

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Text]

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I would not want any question to result in further collaboration among the Acting Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Trade and Commerce, but does the minister say that the government does not know yet what course it is going to follow? Is that the reason for the uncertainty?

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to advise the right hon. gentleman that there will always be the utmost collaboration among all ministers. The matter of the exact time of the introduction, subject to what I have just said, will be finally announced tomorrow.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, surely the house is entitled to know whether the government is going to divide this resolution in order to secure greater support.

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Justice has just pointed out and as the right hon. gentleman, who a few days ago said he was a great House of Commons man, should know, the rules of the house require that questions of this sort shall be debated at the appropriate time. In this case the appropriate time is when the resolution is before the house.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the hon. gentleman that these gratuitous observations do not represent the attitude he took when he was over here and when he argued the very reverse.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Justice or the Secretary of State for External Affairs or the Minister of Trade and Commerce, but since the Minister of Justice seems to need rescuing I will put it to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Can he tell us whether the design tabled at the time the resolution was printed in *Votes and Proceedings* is the design that is to be adopted by that resolution?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, this question is clearly out of order for the reason I gave a moment ago. When this matter is before the house my hon. friend will get the responses to which he will then be entitled. Until such time as that resolution is before the house, these questions are intended not to elicit information but to confuse, and they are contrary to the rules of the house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Because of the general interest in this subject, which is putting it mildly, the Chair has been a little lenient

today. However, in discussing a certain question asked by a member to my left the other day I ruled the question out of order on at least three grounds. I could have given eight but the three grounds were: (1) The question contains observations which might lead to a debate; (2) it refers to a debate or to answers to questions during the current session; (3) it anticipates an order of the day. I would respectfully suggest that we have had quite a few questions concerning the flag issue this afternoon, and we should leave it at that.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Always with deference, Mr. Speaker, I would point out this fact which apparently is not known to Your Honour. On Saturday the Prime Minister's office put out a new model flag, and surely we have the right to learn in parliament what is leaked from his office. We do not want to see controlled news items in this country, and that is the reason we ask this question. Apparently parliament is not to have certain information that the office of the Prime Minister makes available to the press.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, since the right hon. gentleman has not asked a question but made an observation, may I simply say that there is no basis whatsoever, as one might expect in this particular context, for the statement made by the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, this indicates that the Secretary of State for External Affairs does not know the kind of stuff that is being sent out by the Prime Minister's office. In regard to the statement just made I raise a question of privilege. This afternoon's paper contains an article headed "Maple Leaf Flag 'Refined'".

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must at least listen to what the question of privilege is before I can decide whether or not it is in order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): With great respect, Mr. Speaker, there was no question of privilege raised by the right hon. gentleman, who knows that it is contrary to the rules of the house to frame a question as he was seeking to frame it, by means of a commentary. If the right hon. gentleman will frame his question in the appropriate manner based upon what is in this afternoon's paper, it can be considered. But I suggest to you, sir, that in the form in which the right hon. gentleman has proceeded this afternoon, this question is out of order.