

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 13, 1959

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY MR. SPEAKER RESPECTING LOSS OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' DAYS

Mr. Speaker: On Monday, March 9 last, as recorded at page 1724 of *Hansard*, the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Fisher) raised a question concerning the loss of private members' days through a motion for the adjournment of the house under standing order No. 26. He suggested that as the day had not been used for the appointed business it should not be counted as one of the six private members' days. If the point were well taken this would be a private members' day today. I thought, as the hon. member is in his place, I might say I have examined carefully into the precedents, in so far as there are precedents, with a view to seeing whether the rules would permit the solution which he suggested.

I find the answer is simply that the rules do not provide the machinery for compensatory time in such cases. I could go into the matter at some length, but I think the question appears to be reasonably free of doubt and unless hon. members wish a further explanation I shall leave it at that.

PRIVILEGE

MR. PEARSON—REFERENCE TO STATEMENT IN BUDGET PAPERS TABLED BY MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question of privilege which I believe affects every hon. member of the house, inasmuch as it concerns particularly the accuracy of the records of the house. This matter deals with financial assistance to Newfoundland under the terms of union; not, I hasten to add, to the question of the form and substance of the obligation of the government of Canada under those terms of union. That matter I have already discussed. It has to do with a statement made and reports inserted in the records of this house which concern the legislative basis for any such assistance.

I should add also, Mr. Speaker, that this matter, the breach I refer to, was made on budget night, Thursday night, and normally I should have brought it to the attention of

the house on Friday; but as *Hansard* was not available to members until Friday afternoon, this is the first opportunity I have had, after having read *Hansard*, to bring it to the attention of the house.

On Thursday evening at page 2410 of *Hansard*, the Minister of Finance asked leave of the house to place on *Hansard* certain budget papers and tables and, of course, he was given that permission. Those tables and the explanatory notes attached to them are now part of the record of this house. One of those statements, Mr. Speaker, is in my view false and misleading, especially in relation to the explanation which is appended to the table, and as such I think is a breach of parliamentary privilege.

I am referring to table No. 11 on page 55 of the budget papers. In that table there is a figure of \$13,600,000 under the heading, "Additional grants to Newfoundland". In the paragraph explaining it we have the following words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): What is the page number?

Mr. Pearson: Page 55 of the budget papers appended to *Hansard* of April 9, table No. 11. The explanatory paragraph attached to the table reads:

Under the Newfoundland additional grants act, pursuant to the report of the royal commission on Newfoundland finances appointed under clause 29 of the terms of union, Newfoundland is to receive additional grants for the fiscal years 1957-58 to 1961-62 inclusive. The additional grants for the first two fiscal years, which are payable in 1958-59, amounted to \$13½ million.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, although the Prime Minister has indicated that such a Newfoundland bill covering this matter is to be introduced in the House of Commons, no such resolution and no such bill have been introduced. The Minister of Finance in this statement not only assumes that such a bill has been introduced but assumes that parliament has passed this bill. He is acting accordingly, by including in this table the figure which has not yet been before parliament, let alone been passed by parliament.

I hold, Mr. Speaker, that this is a contempt of parliament and therefore an important breach of our parliamentary privileges. Unless instructions are issued by this house that these statements be corrected, they will remain as a permanent part