

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 8, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. BALDWIN—MR. KNOWLES (WINNIPEG NORTH CENTRE)—MAKING OUTSIDE HOUSE OF PROPOSAL RESPECTING WAGE RESTRAINTS

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege in respect of which I gave Your Honour notice and also filed what might be called a caveat on Friday afternoon. It has to do with statements made by the Minister of Finance over the weekend in the face of his refusal to deal with the same matters in the House.

During the last week in particular a number of questions were directed to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and others. Today I have read and reread these questions and answers, and the only impression to be derived is that the government had no intention of making any announcement or moving toward any specific proposals to deal with the problems of inflation and unemployment. I have a number of these quotations here, but I will not take the time of the House to read them.

Mr. Trudeau: Why not?

Mr. Baldwin: They include questions and answers on June 1, May 25, May 29, and twice on June 4. The Prime Minister, it may be, did not have time over the weekend to read them, but I have read and reread them with some interest. In the face of this we have now witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of the Minister of Finance and other government people involved making proposals at the Federal-Provincial Conference of Finance Ministers in Winnipeg over the weekend in which they advocated very specific wage restraints and controls, with a hint that such may well be the subject of sanction and enforcement. Thus, what we heard during the past week in response to our questions was only an exercise in a sly and furtive form of deceit—an attempt to keep from this House facts and proposals it is entitled to hear at first hand.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2:10 p.m.)

Mr. Baldwin: This House and the country have been remarkably patient with respect to the government's stumbling and blundering. We in the opposition, because government members have sat silent and helpless—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: —have attempted to obtain some idea of what the government proposes to do. The question of the wisdom or not of these proposals is irrelevant to the issue I am now raising. The sad and pitiful spectacle emerges of a government which does not know where it wants to go, and even if it did it does not know how to get there. We have known this for some time. The country is finally waking up to the fact.

There is a responsibility upon the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) and others to be frank and honest in the House in connection with this serious problem. Solutions will not come about unless there is confidence and trust between government and Parliament and government and the people. Unless the government responds frankly to proper questions in the House, the present lack of confidence will increase in the country and the possibility of a solution will be even less than it is today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before the Minister of Finance responds I have to mention that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre also filed a notice somewhat along the same lines as the one which was filed by the hon. member for Peace River. Perhaps the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre might be allowed to express his views before the Minister of Finance speaks.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to carry out the intention which I indicated to you in the notice I sent to your office this morning. I raise this matter as a question of privilege and I may say, Mr.