

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: May I deal with the point of order first.

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): May I speak to the point of order. The minister has, in my view, given what should not be given on orders of the day. He has made a point, in connection with the performance of duties by Conservative members of parliament, that seems to be impinging on the functions of other members who are not supporters of the government. If we could seize such opportunities to get up and make this kind of point that the minister has made, all of us could give examples of defeated Conservative candidates impinging upon the rights of ordinary members of parliament. It seems to me the minister was completely out of order in making these remarks.

Mr. Speaker: I confess that I had similar thoughts as the minister made his reply. I did not, perhaps, intervene early enough. The precise point of order was the question of a reflection on a member for taking an interest in a constituency other than his own. As I understood the minister there was no reflection on the hon. member for Essex East for concerning himself with this matter, but rather he was giving a word of approbation to certain other members for what they had done. It is quite clear that it would be improper to reflect on the hon. member for Essex East or any member in the house for taking an interest in any matter of public administration in Canada. I do not believe the reflection was intended or was made.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): May I ask the minister, now that he agrees that someone must be concerned about unemployment in London and elsewhere, whether he will answer my question, which I will repeat. Will the minister—

Mr. Speaker: I think it is unnecessary to repeat the question.

Mr. Green: There may have been one question asked by the hon. member for Assiniboia—

Mr. Speaker: Would the Acting Prime Minister defer for just one minute, until we conclude this matter?

Mr. Hees: May I complete my answer to the hon. member for Essex East. I forgot to add that the hon. members for Middlesex East and Middlesex West have drawn this matter to my attention and are very concerned about it. As a result of the concern these hon. members have shown in this matter the Canadian National Railways, on my suggestion, have made surveys of this very serious problem, have gone into it from every

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

angle and done everything they possibly could to retain the operation in London. It is with great reluctance that they have found it impossible to do so. They have gone into this matter very thoroughly indeed, being very interested in employment for the people in London and in every other part of the country, as is this government. I am sure that Mr. Gordon was as amused and interested as I have been to see members of the former government shedding crocodile tears when during their term of office they never did anything about the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The minister is quite out of order in volunteering a statement of that kind in response to a question on the orders of the day. The Acting Prime Minister has been—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): This matter is not concluded, Mr. Speaker. I have asked the minister a simple question and if he does not wish to answer he does not need to do so. That question is this. Is the Minister of Transport prepared to tell the president of the Canadian National Railways that he should at least discuss this matter with the mayor of London and the workers concerned?

Mr. Hees: If I may answer the question—

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but may I say that the question put by the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) appears to be not so much a question as an urging or an argument—

Mr. Hees: An order.

Mr. Speaker: —for a course of action.

Mr. Hees: If I might answer that question, may I say that I was referring to something which the hon. member is reported to have said in London; that he believes the Conservative government should use its influence without interference in the normal C.N.R. operations. Demanding that the president of the C.N.R. do something is interfering with the normal C.N.R. operations.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): You do not intend to do anything.

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): I am rising on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A question has been asked and the answer given has transgressed the rule on many points. It contains political references. It contains argument on the relevant merits of various members of parliament, about various parties and a great many other things that are purely argumentative. Surely if this period is to be useful we are entitled to have from the minister something more precise by way of observance of the rules in giving answers to questions. Since the points of order should