

Question of Privilege

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are getting a little far afield when we get on to closure. Would the Prime Minister deal with the question of the supplementary estimates and the alleged matter of privilege?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I surely have the right to answer these hon. gentlemen who speak of dictators. These were the petty dictators of those days. These are they.

Mr. Chevrier: You are the dictator.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The same old bunch. I submit that the motion is out of order. It is obviously an intended subterfuge on their part. They have had 23 days to discuss supplementary estimates, and now the hon. gentleman has the colossal nerve to stand there and say these things should have been put through by March 31.

Mr. Chevrier: Why didn't you bring them on before? We waited for weeks before they were brought on.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, we waited for weeks and weeks and the hon. gentlemen, while their leader was travelling around, were talking.

Mr. Chevrier: Where have you been?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): We will be travelling more, too.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—hon. gentlemen opposite have been talking and talking. I asked them to pass the supplementary estimates and I said, "Let us get the legislation through and then we will have the opportunity of answering to the Canadian people", and I know what the result will be.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pigeon: They have no leader; they are not ready to face an election.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might have an opportunity to comment on some of the gratuitous and characteristically personal references made by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has accused us on this side of the house of being petty dictators. That phrase might be applied to hon. gentlemen opposite without the word "petty" before it. The Prime Minister has also accused me of travelling instead of remaining in the house and presumably obstructing the legislation. The Prime Minister cannot have it both ways.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: The Prime Minister should be the last person in Canada to talk about travelling. The sky is full of government aeroplanes these days going to political meetings.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pigeon: They have no leader.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am very loth to interrupt such an interesting debate, but I have heard the argument pro and con on this motion which, if it stands, must stand as a motion based on privilege. In my opinion it does not.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, as the seconder of the motion—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Pickersgill:—I would hope I could be heard before Your Honour makes a decision.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I could be assured by the hon. member that he will direct his remarks to that issue and not join in the debate which I feel would be more appropriate on another occasion, I will hear what he has to say. The motion is to order government business. If there is a question of privilege to found the motion on, that is the only consideration that would be relevant. I can see none. I will give the hon. member a brief opportunity to speak.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Mr. Speaker, I will address myself very strictly and narrowly to the question of privilege involved. The question of privilege is the prior right of the House of Commons to vote supply before proceeding with the Queen's business.

Mr. Hellyer: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill: This is what Simon de Montfort asserted; this is what William Lyon Mackenzie asserted—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: Here we have \$138 million in the supplementary estimates that have not yet been voted. They relate to the last fiscal year, not the present fiscal year, a fiscal year that ended nine days ago. Except for one hour last week the government did not bring forward these supplementary estimates, notwithstanding the fact that they had committed the name of Canada to the spending of this money. I suggest that the most fundamental and elementary of all the rights of the House of Commons is to vote supply before going on with the business of the government. These ministers forget they are ministers; they forget that the House of Commons is supreme.