

Privilege—Mr. Stevens

Mr. Speaker, I am shocked to see that we have just lost a whole day after having authorized the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) to borrow \$2.5 billion, without providing for the possibility of a debate or amendments. To my mind, we have now reached the height of the ridiculous: yesterday we were kept, by standard procedure from discussing this matter, at the risk of raising a general outcry in the House, and today we lose about 15 minutes over a matter of procedure that was brought up in the past; yet the same hon. members who protest today ganged up yesterday with the Liberals to pass clause 5 and give the Minister of Finance borrowing powers to the extent of \$2.5 billion.

● (1430)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: If there are no other members who wish to contribute to the point, I might say that the hon. member has raised, as he did on the previous occasion to which he referred in his remarks, a very important question about the procedures of the House relating not only to the examination of the estimates leading to the decision of the House upon supply of money for the government, which we dealt with earlier, the whole process of which was forced into rather extraordinary circumstances because of an election which fell at the time it did during this year. I think the House is well aware that the opposition took surely what must be regarded as a very responsible position in cooperating in compressing the time to examine the estimates and the whole of the supply process in order to see to it that the affairs of the country might go on financed by parliament with its approval, as it ought to be.

The result of that, however, was to so compress the supply procedure and the examination of the estimates that it has been the cause of concern and complaint on a number of fronts. I have sufficient sympathy for the argument put forward by the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens), supported by others, that I would be tempted to reserve the decision and take careful consideration of the matters that have been put forward this afternoon. However, I would be deceptive if I did that because it would create the impression that there were not ingredients in the process which lead me to an immediate conclusion. By that I mean there are two elements involved here that take it out of the possibility even of reserving it, the first being that surely the well-established rule that the time for raising a question of privilege is at the first occasion upon which the grievance arises in the House of Commons.

Surely, the first opportunity during which this grievance in respect to Clause 5 and its contents arose was during the time last evening when the House considered it. Unless the House be tempted to the view that was not in the minds of members, there is of course the question that was put by the very distinguished and experienced member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) about that particular point which surely, if for no other reason, would have attracted the attention of hon. members. Therefore, the Chair must assume at that moment the attention of the House was directed toward the difficulties with Clause 5.

Furthermore, bearing in mind that the difficulty was raised last night and thereafter the House proceeded to the

[Mr. Fortin.]

consideration of the clause, although under strictures according to the rules, and ultimately approved it in accordance with the rules of the House by a vote that took place. I would have to consider that both of those ingredients would establish beyond any question that the procedures which took place last evening, although perhaps the subject for a complaint and a grievance by members of the House, were in accordance with the rules and were finalized in accordance with the long established rules of the House. It would be most improper for me to create the impression at that time that any proceedings which could be taken today could in any way cause the House to reflect on a decision it took properly and in accordance with the rules last night.

I therefore say again to the members of the House that, while I have some sympathy, and surely it must be the only reasonable interpretation of the remarks of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) that there is sympathy for the complaint put forward, it does not establish itself within the rules as a question of privilege at this moment. I would only add that the comments of the President of the Privy Council must be taken if not as a clear undertaking, at least as very close to an undertaking tantamount to the previous one that the hon. President of the Privy Council was good enough to give to the chamber, that is that the supply procedures would be examined by the procedure committee and furthermore the procedures contained in the actual supply bill, being as it is under a very severe guillotine with regard to amendment and debate, would also be taken under consideration by that committee and certainly that is something for which we would hope.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak on this very interesting point. Your Honour's decision, of course, is not the subject of my point of order. In light of what the government House leader said, and in view of the fact the matter is now before the other place, will the government House leader undertake to get in touch with the other place and give them his views on the matter so that they, having greater opportunity for deliberation, might also give some thought to this matter.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I would not concede the other place has that kind of jurisdiction over money bills.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the point of order. This is no reflection on Your Honour's decision which I must accept. I wish to ask whether Your Honour can assure himself whether his law officer advised him prior to the introduction of this bill that it was not in conformity with the requirements of a bill to be brought into the House.

Mr. Speaker: To my knowledge, there is no procedure whereby the hon. member and I can get into a question and answer session, perhaps fortunately.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!