

Productivity Council Minutes Requested

It is for that reason I am outlining who these people are, so that we can judge whether the words of these people in their entirety, every syllable that they have uttered and which have been taken down in the minutes of these meetings, should be produced for public scrutiny.

Mr. Benidickson: Only minutes.

Mr. Hees: Now, if I may continue—

Mr. Speaker: Having heard what the minister said, and particularly what the hon. member said in proposing his motion, that the issue here was as to the value of the productivity council, and that that was the issue before the Canadian people, one side taking one position and others taking a contrary position, I find that in reply the minister is indicating the personnel of the national productivity council which to me, in considering this issue, would be a most germane point. So long as the minister was not straying off into long biographies about each individual, then I think that nothing I have heard so far is out of order.

Mr. Hees: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might also add that a very strong point in reply to the point made by the hon. member for Skeena is that he believes the productivity council, as it has operated, is not a satisfactory council to handle the work that has been entrusted to it. Therefore in answer to his charge I propose to outline to the house in some detail just what the productivity council has been doing since its inception, so that we can better determine the question that has been brought before the house this afternoon by the hon. member for Skeena.

Mr. Pickersgill: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that what the hon. gentleman is now seeking to do is in most direct and flagrant contradiction of the judgment given by Mr. Speaker Michener, which was read to the house a few moments ago by my hon. friend from St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Turner). What we are supposed to be discussing here, as Mr. Speaker Michener put it so succinctly, is whether or not it is opportune to produce certain documents, not whether or not a particular agency of government is doing a good job. Maybe the documents would show that, after they were produced; but that is not the issue before us. It seems to me therefore that the minister is ignoring the rule of your illustrious predecessor in embarking upon the course which he now proposes to take.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, before—

Mr. Speaker: If he is addressing himself to the point of order then I will hear the hon. minister.

[Mr. Hees.]

Mr. Churchill: Before you make a decision with regard to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, I do not think the house is prepared to accept his idea or his interpretation of the ruling of a previous speaker.

Mr. Chevrier: Why not?

Mr. Churchill: He said Mr. Speaker Michener used the word "opportune". I think we had better have a direct ruling as against that, because I thought the word used by Mr. Speaker Michener was "desirable", which has an entirely different meaning to the word "opportune".

Mr. Pickersgill: I am perfectly happy to substitute the one for the other.

Mr. Churchill: Maybe you will not be, by the time I finish.

Mr. Chevrier: You just want to talk it out until six o'clock.

Mr. Churchill: In order to determine whether it is desirable, or worth while, or advantageous for the house to have minutes produced I think we should know something about the operations of the council to determine how important are its duties. It seems to me that is what the Minister of Trade and Commerce was going to do.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena, if he is on the point of order.

Mr. Howard: Just this point, Mr. Speaker. While it is germane to it, we are not seeking a verbatim transcript of words. We are seeking the minutes; and they are two distinct things.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate was rather quick, and as a matter of fact his thinking is more or less in line with that of the Chair as a result of the last sentence uttered by the minister prior to the, shall we say, interruption by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate. I do not think it is germane to this debate, or relevant, that we should go into the matter of what the productivity council has done or what it has not done. The point at issue is a narrow one in this particular debate. It is limited to the desirability of the production of the documents. The motion is one calling on the government to produce the documents referred to in the motion, and the question is whether they should or should not be produced. I admit this is a narrow issue. The minister can state his reasons why he is opposing their production, and those who would support the motion can state their reasons why these particular documents