

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member does not disclose any new facts which indicate any alteration of policy in this respect.

TIMMINS, ONT.—REPORTED CARRYING OF MAIL BY STRIKEBREAKERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. M. W. Martin (Timmins): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday last I directed a question to the Postmaster General and I believe his reply at the time was that the matter had not been brought to his attention. I wonder whether it has been by now, and whether he can inform the house whether any action is contemplated?

Hon. W. M. Hamilton (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, subsequent to the hon. member's question I received a copy of the telegram, and an official of my department is in Timmins today looking into the matter.

FINANCE

INQUIRY AS TO AMOUNT OF MAIN ESTIMATES THIS YEAR

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. M. Benidickson (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I think it will be observed that I have attempted to co-operate with the Minister of Finance and keep in order when the estimates are presented to the house. I might address a question to the minister at this time which I think is in order. The total of the statutory items and the amounts to be voted by this house last year amounted to \$5,740 million. Will the minister just indicate what the total is for this year as compared with last year?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the hon. member is inquiring about information which is readily available to all hon. members by looking at the document which has been tabled, and which the house has directed to be referred to the committee of supply.

Mr. Benidickson: Just on that point I would simply say, of course, that information has been made available to the representatives of the people through the press, but those of us who are sitting here performing our duties as members of parliament will not be able to leave the chamber for some time to obtain that information.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. member raises that as a matter of privilege; if he does, perhaps it could be commented on.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance another question. Would he indicate to his colleagues

in the house whether he informed the press at an earlier hour that the proposed budgetary expenditures as contained in the main estimates tabled today total \$6,123 million as compared with \$4,526 million when his last Liberal predecessor presented estimates to the house?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that the hon. member is seeking to give information. The first part of his question appeared to be an inquiry, but the latter part was not appropriate.

Mr. Benidickson: Is the minister going to indicate whether or not the figure of \$6,123 million was given to the press?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member is asking about a matter with which I have dealt twice now and I think he should accept the decision of the Chair. The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, I should like to raise a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. member defer it until the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges has asked his question.

[*Later:*]

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to raise for your consideration a matter that I believe affects the privileges of all hon. members. It has to do with the tabling of the estimates earlier today and the disallowance of questions which may or may not have been in order in the form in which they were asked.

We have had the practice adopted by the minister of distributing information to the press earlier this day, and at the opening of the house we were not permitted to get that information although the very subject on which the information would have a bearing is the item of government business which will occupy the rest of the sitting today.

The point that I think is worthy of consideration is whether or not some other method should be provided by the minister for making available to the members of the House of Commons that information which was made available to the press earlier today, so that members might use it where it would be properly used, in the debate on this main item of government business which is to come before us today.

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): This is about as lame a question of privilege as hon. members are likely to hear. It is said that prior to the tabling of these estimates in the house, I have made available to the members of the press certain