

Inquiries of the Ministry

amount covered by contracts, the rate of production and delivery were not revealed. Later the main purchasers in the United States and the United Kingdom asked us to keep the details confidential for commercial reasons. In the result, only general information was given out even, as I said a moment ago, when in certain cases contracts had been signed.

There is much more information in this connection that might be brought together. What I have given represents in sufficient detail a recital of the course of events which I suggest gives the answer to the use of incredible language and incomprehensible denials of the existence of something in which the Leader of the Opposition had participated. It also belies the use of the word "shocking" on the part of hon. members opposite in describing what they charged was concealed. There was no concealment.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): I expect that you, sir, will give me the same latitude in dealing with this matter that you gave the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker), in view of the nature of his reply and the fact that he brought me into his reply by name and referred to statements I have made in regard to this matter. I expect, therefore, to be given the opportunity of answering those statements made about me and about this matter by the Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: No.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the position ought to be clear before the Leader of the Opposition proceeds. The Prime Minister asked for leave to answer a question at considerable length. The Prime Minister was given that leave and answered the question, bringing in references to the Leader of the Opposition, of course.

I should think that apart from leave of the house, those hon. members who are interested would be entitled to ask questions to elucidate the answer or to explain their positions, and that the Leader of the Opposition, to whom personal reference was made, would be entitled to make a personal explanation with respect to his part in the matter. But I would not without leave of the house give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition so that he might make an extended statement, or comment in general terms. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wishes to ask for more than that, but that is my view of what his rights are.

Mr. Pearson: I ask for the right to reply to the statement which the Prime Minister made about me and about my position on this

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

matter which went far beyond the facts which were necessary to answer the question which was put to him.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The Leader of the Opposition said I went beyond what it was necessary to include in my answer. I did so because of an ex parte statement which he himself issued on Friday outside this house. I have no objection whatsoever to the hon. gentleman answering any suggestions I made regarding his conduct in this connection.

Mr. Argue: On the point of order, I think it is only fair and proper that the Leader of the Opposition should be given full latitude to make a reply with regard to those parts of the statement in which the Prime Minister referred to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: I take it the house is prepared to recognize the right of the Leader of the Opposition to deal with references to his part in this matter by the Prime Minister in his answer.

Mr. Pearson: I will proceed to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I will say at the beginning that what the Prime Minister has said, not so much in answer to a question but on this general matter, makes the conduct of the government and of the right hon. gentleman with regard to this question even more incomprehensible and incredible than I had previously thought it to be. What we have learned this afternoon from the Prime Minister is that in respect of 24 million pounds of uranium to be delivered from Canada through Eldorado to the United Kingdom atomic energy authority in the period 1963-66 there is no contract at all. That is what the Prime Minister says now, no contract at all. The Prime Minister went to a great deal of trouble to talk about the Bermuda conference—

Mr. Diefenbaker: No formal contract, I said.

Mr. Pearson: No formal contract is no contract. This is an easy way to slip out of this, to slip out of it by using sophistry of that kind. We shall find out whether there is a contract in the minds of the Minister of Trade and Commerce and others by quoting what they have to say. I think I have a right to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister quoted at some length from the proceedings of the Bermuda conference. That conference was one which I remember very well. It took place on March 26 and 27, a few days before the dissolution of parliament which was, I think, on April 10 or 13. That conference issued a statement from which the Prime Minister has quoted. Included in that statement—and the Prime