

Government Organization Act, 1970

the disadvantaged regions of this country, in particular the Atlantic provinces.

I say this with particular reference to the creation of employment in the Atlantic provinces. Which are the two provinces getting least benefit from this program? They are the two with the highest rates of unemployment in the country, namely, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, one with 11 per cent unemployment and the other with 15 per cent.

● (8:30 p.m.)

This House was denied the right to have the document tabled today. Members were denied the opportunity of responding to it and of replying to the statement made in tabling it. A statement was made outside the House, notwithstanding the fact that the House was sitting. This document was released today in the city of Halifax one hour before the House was to begin its sitting. I submit this is clearly in contempt of Parliament. It shows complete contempt for the traditions and ancient privileges of this institution. This is a document of tremendous importance to the Atlantic Provinces. For example, chapter 1 refers to the economy of the Atlantic provinces, with which it deals in great detail. In chapter 2 there is a resumé of the main recommendations—

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I call Your Honour's attention to citation 159 of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules which provides, amongst other things, that a document which has been cited ought to be laid upon the table of the House if it can be done without injury to the public interest. Paragraph 4 of that citation provides:

Official papers quoted during a debate should be laid on the table of the House. Mr. Patterson, member for the electoral district of Essex, and Mr. Cockburn, member for the electoral district of Northumberland, having, in the course of the debate on a motion for an order of the House and the amendment thereto, read extracts from certain official papers in their possession, and relating to the question under consideration, Mr. Mackenzie raised the point of order that official papers, when cited by an honourable member, ought to be laid on the table of the House. Mr. Speaker ruled: "That the point of order was well taken, and that the papers cited by the honourable members for Essex and Northumberland should be placed in the possession of the House".

It is true that Your Honour is sitting in committee, but I suggest that under that provision there is a direct, mandatory requirement that when an hon. member sees fit in the course of debate to cite from what are in effect official papers—and this document can only be considered, of course, an official paper—they should be laid on the table of the House and made available to all hon. members.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, on the point of order raised by my hon. friend from Peace River may I say he anticipated me because it was my intention to ask for the consent of the committee to comply with the expressed wish of the Prime Minister that I table this document. I was not permitted the opportunity to do so today, for reasons which I will not go into, notwithstanding the fact that I had been asked personally by the Prime Minister

[Mr. McGrath.]

on the floor of the House to table the document. I endeavoured, in the opportunity presented to me today under Standing Order 41(2), to comply with the Prime Minister's wish that I table the document. I am concerned that members of the government have not seen it, let alone members of the House. I am sure that the Prime Minister is as anxious to see the document as we are. Certainly, I am sure no member of the government would withhold consent to my tabling this important and very valuable document.

Consequently, supported by the citation from Beauchesne placed on the record by my hon. friend from Peace River, and in accordance with the expressed desire this afternoon of the right hon. Prime Minister, I am very pleased and honoured to be able to lay on the table of the House this very important document for the edification of the government and members of this House.

The Chairman: Order, please. The Chair is prepared to make a ruling. Are there any other hon. members who wish to contribute to the point of order?

[Translation]

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Chairman, concerning the point of order, I must point out that—

The hon. member has just moved that the committee accept the tabling of the document. In my opinion, the document should be tabled, if warranted, at the Committee on Regional Development. That committee is having hearings during this part of the session. The hon. member should submit the document to the committee in charge of reviewing the operations of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. I do not feel that this is the right time to table the document in the House.

[English]

The Chairman: Order, please. I have heard the argument of the House leader for the official opposition that there may be some procedure by which the document referred to by the hon. member for St. John's East can be tabled at this stage of the proceedings. I must say, I have very grave doubts that this can be done while the House is sitting in committee of the whole. The hon. member for St. John's East made reference to the wish of the Prime Minister. I cannot assess the position in that respect because I have no knowledge of it. However, it seems to me that in committee of the whole we must follow the procedures of the committee. We must concern ourselves with our terms of reference. The committee is discussing clause 14 of Bill C-207, dealing with ministers and ministries of state.

As I indicated when the point of order was raised a few moments ago, there is some doubt in my mind about the relevancy of the remarks of the hon. member for St. John's East. Be that as it may, I think in committee we have been relatively generous in the matter of relevancy. However, I do not think there is any procedure, with great respect, by which this document could be tabled in committee of the whole at this time.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I did contemplate, in light of the ruling you have made, moving a motion that the