

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his intention to ask this question. I am advised that officials of both the board of transport commissioners and the Canadian National Railways are now conducting a thorough investigation into this unfortunate accident.

allotted so that no decision will be taken without every member who desires to do so being able to state his position?

MONCTON, N.B. AND LONDON, ONT.—FURTHER
STATEMENT ON LAY-OFFS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): On Friday last the hon. member for Assiniboia, in the course of an inquiry regarding lay-offs by the Canadian National Railways, asked the following supplementary question:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has no authority whatever, in so far as private members' days are concerned, to make suggestions to the house. I believe there have been discussions as between the house leader, who is not here today, the hon. gentleman opposite and a representative of the C.C.F. to the end that if the two opposition parties would agree, the debate on Thursday, if uncompleted, might go over until Monday, another private members' day, and thereby permit the fullest possible discussion. But beyond the suggestion of the house leader to that effect, the Prime Minister has no authority whatever, as the hon. gentleman would be the first to admit, to direct any alteration in so far as private members' days are concerned.

Will the minister check with the C.N.R. on the suggestion or the accusation made in this statement to the effect that the action that has been taken by the C.N.R. involves waste in neglecting maintenance work on the railway?

Mr. Chevrier: I should like to ask a supplementary question. Has the Prime Minister seen last night's statement of the business of the house, wherein it was indicated that in all probability Monday and Tuesday would be devoted to a supply motion?

In answer may I say that I have been in touch with the management of the Canadian National, and they advise that the reductions which have been made are a part of the normal continuing process of adjusting the size of the work force to meet varying employment requirements. The management further advise that in the past 10 years a major rehabilitation of the C.N.R. plant and facilities has been accomplished, and that any suggestion to the effect that maintenance is being neglected is entirely without foundation.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I can only speak on the information I had as of yesterday morning, but my memory of the conversation I had with the Minister of Trade and Commerce is that he brought to the attention of the hon. gentleman and the representative of the C.C.F. the fact that, if they were agreeable, Monday might be an additional day so that the fullest possible discussion might take place. If it has not been brought to their attention I now bring it to their attention, and suggest that if they are desirous of having the fullest discussion, the house could unanimously agree on Thursday evening that if the debate has not concluded, that it go over to the next private members' day on Monday, to the end that following discussion—if the house so determines and only if the house so determines—a vote may take place.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Did these lay-offs take place in conjunction with an order from the management to reduce the budget for these expenditures by 5 per cent?

Mr. Hees: I have passed on the answer which the management have given me.

Mr. Argue: Since this question was raised earlier in debate, I wonder if the minister would make a further inquiry to see whether an order went out from the management to reduce expenditure by an arbitrary 5 per cent?

Mr. Hees: I will.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

OPPORTUNITY FOR FULL DISCUSSION OF BILL ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister indicate what recommendations the government proposes to make to the house in connection with the forthcoming discussion on capital punishment, in order to ensure that sufficient time will be

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The Prime Minister said that the house leader, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, made the suggestion to representatives of the two opposition parties that Monday next might be used as an additional day to debate the bill having to do with capital punishment. Mr. Speaker, that suggestion was never made to me, although I have had rather lengthy conversations with the house leader on this subject. No such suggestion or proposal was made, however, in any way, shape or form.