

Question of Privilege

Mr. Speaker: I should like to give the minister an opportunity to comment on the question of privilege which has been raised since it has been carried to the extent that it has.

Mr. Pickersgill: On the point of order—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am speaking on the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member's point of order relates to hearing the Minister of Finance, I will hear him first.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Yes, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is this. I quite agree with Your Honour that the minister should be allowed to speak. However, I also feel that my friend the hon. member for Laurier who has raised the point should be allowed to complete his sentence before the minister is allowed to reply.

Mr. Speaker: I indicated to the hon. member for Laurier that I thought the point was not properly taken at this time, but that he has made his point to the extent that I think it is only fair that the minister should be allowed to comment.

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Particularly, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member for Laurier has used the expression "sought to mislead" and the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer), whether you heard him or not, just now used the expression "false and misleading" as applied to the statement I made. The hon. member apparently is not acquainted with the rules of this house. When I have made my statement to you, Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege I hope you will direct him, in accordance with the rules of the house, to withdraw his words.

My remark yesterday on this subject is to be found at page 1823 of *Hansard*, in the second column. This is what I said, and I was referring to March 15:

This is normally the day when cheques are payable with respect to a number of the liabilities of the government. I must inform the committee that by reason of the fact that these supplementary estimates have not yet been disposed of, notwithstanding the warnings given to the house by my colleague some days ago, it will not be possible now to pay on their due date certain accounts of suppliers in various departments, and certain employees cannot receive their mid-March pay until supply is released.

That statement is correct, Mr. Speaker. The information given to the house this morning by the hon. member for Laurier is wrong. If there is anything misleading, it is the statement made by the hon. member for Laurier.

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the minister has had ample opportunity now to comment.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): With respect, Mr. Speaker, may I point out that I have something further to say on this subject, and I think I am quite within my rights after language such as that which has been used this morning by those two hon. members with respect to the statement I made yesterday.

Mr. Chevrier: Who is in the chair?

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the minister that I curtailed the remarks of the hon. member for Laurier, who raised the question of privilege originally. The reason it seemed proper that the minister should be allowed to comment was that the hon. member for Laurier had gone far enough to make a statement which required to be dealt with. However, unless the minister is raising a new point I suggest to him that in view of my restricting the hon. member for Laurier, the matter has now been satisfactorily disposed of. It should not have been raised at all.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

EARLY RETIREMENT—INQUIRY AS TO REPORTED STUDY

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): I should like to direct to the Prime Minister a question suggested last evening by his colleague the Minister of Labour. Can the Prime Minister tell the house what officials are making the study of the question of early retirement, to which he referred in his television broadcast on Wednesday evening, March 14, and what minister is in charge of this study?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): As the hon. gentleman knows, Mr. Speaker, the names of officials, should there be such officials, are not revealed in the house. I remember an occasion many years ago when a similar question was asked and that answer was given. Furthermore, as I stated on the television broadcast, I am having this whole matter looked into. Opinions are being secured from those who are knowledgeable on the subject, and when it is appropriate to bring the matter to the attention of the house it will be done.

Mr. Chevrier: I should like to ask a supplementary question arising out of what the Prime Minister has said. Surely when public funds are being expended on a matter