

Inquiries of the Ministry

Excellency and divert the money for other purposes. I am of course referring to purposes for which money has been appropriated. True, the matter would have to come back to this House for discussion, but I submit most sincerely that if that were done there would be a flouting of the provisions of the Standing Orders of this House and of the constitution.

I conclude by saying that in the past 18 months the power of the government has expanded far too much and the power of the Commons has been eroded in a studied fashion. I submit, therefore, that we cannot permit this bill to go through unchallenged. That is why I have raised this issue. Your Honour may wish to take the matter under advisement and bring down a decision on whether the bill ought to be allowed to proceed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Peace River has raised very important issues respecting the procedural and constitutional privileges of this House. Since hon. members have not had prior notice of the point raised by the hon. member in connection with the first reading in the House of the Senate bill referred to, I should like to suggest to hon. members that the matter be left in abeyance at the present time to allow those hon. members who wish to study the matter the opportunity of considering it from its different aspects. In due course, perhaps at the beginning of next week, argument might be heard from hon. members on both sides of the House about the point raised by the hon. member for Peace River. Also, the Chair would be given additional time thereafter to consider the arguments in support of and against the position advanced by the hon. member for Peace River. For the time being, the matter will be allowed to rest, with the consent of the House, and hon. members who take a special interest in these very complex questions will have an opportunity to give the situation serious thought over the weekend.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**TRANSPORT**

**SUGGESTED CURTAILMENT OF RAILWAY
PASSENGER SERVICE—INQUIRY
AS TO ACTION**

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, may I address a question to the Prime Minister. In light of the historic commitment of the federal government to provide a rail link from coast to coast in Canada, and the ever

[Mr. Baldwin.]

increasing congestion and ever higher accident rates on our highways, what steps is the government taking to assure Canadians that adequate rail transportation will continue to be available for passengers despite the attempts of Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways to avoid their responsibilities?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the hon. member will realize that he is raising a matter of very wide scope. He is inviting the Prime Minister to make a statement of a general nature. In all fairness, I suggest that this statement ought to be made on motions. I wonder whether the hon. member might not put his question in a different way.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, will you permit me to rephrase my question in the manner you have suggested? Will the Prime Minister make a statement on motions and set out the government's position with regard to the historic commitment to provide train service across Canada from coast to coast?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to discuss with the Minister of Transport the possibility of such a statement being made in due course. The matter is now before the Canadian Transport Commission. We think that we should let the companies have a chance to be heard before the commission and see what action the commission will take.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But who is the Commission?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question.

Could the Prime Minister assure the house that serious studies will be made on the management of railways who ask for grants,—for they are grants—before any elimination of service is accepted?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In my view, it is necessary that serious studies be made, if those companies want to put their proposals before the Canadian Transport Commission.

As I already said, we have to wait for the Commission's reaction and if the government feels their decision is wrong, we shall decide whether we should act under the law.

[*English*]

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): A supplementary question, Mr.