

Economic Forecast for Current Year

practice now, because to do so would be holding himself up to ridicule. The Minister of Trade and Commerce—the one who is supposed to feel the pulse of the economy of the nation—

Mr. Hees: Stop being pompous.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. gentleman ought not to be infantile in this house. He is now in a difficult position. He feels himself embarrassed at the moment—

Mr. Hees: I am not embarrassed.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): He does not want to take issue with the Prime Minister or with the former minister of trade and commerce. What we are asking is that these reports be given to this house on the basis of the precedent established by the Prime Minister. We said they should not be given, but that is not what this government says; it is not what the Prime Minister said on January 20, 1958. He said, then, in substance: I do not care how confidential this is; I do not care how privileged it is; it is information that parliament should have. That is the practice he established.

We are asking through this motion that the government should give us the same information as the Prime Minister assumed he had the right to give and in the way in which he used it in January of 1958. As my hon. friend from Bonavista-Twillingate has said, the situation today is parallel with the events which attended January 20, 1958. We are on the eve of an election. We shall be arguing in the country that unemployment under this administration has reached dangerous and alarming levels. The government will be answering that argument. The government will be trying to justify its policy. It will indicate that there is a gradual improvement in the economic state of the nation. This will be contested. Some economists are already contesting it.

An hon. Member: Are you happy?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. member asks: "Am I happy?" He knows perfectly well that that is an impulsive question from a young member of parliament. We should like to do something about it. We want first of all to know what are the facts. Let us have these forecasts which the minister receives every day, or every month. Let us have this series of reports.

Mr. Crestohl: Why do they suppress it?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Why should hon. gentlemen find it proper to deny this information to us when the Prime Minister in this house felt that this was information that

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

should be given to parliament? What justification can there be? Is there something in these reports that the minister is concealing that is contrary to the public assessment of the economic situation?

Mr. Pickersgill: And contrary to what the government says?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes, and contrary to what the government says?

An hon. Member: No coaching.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Is the situation going to be more serious in the months ahead?

Mr. Pallett: This is not 1956.

Mr. Pickersgill: It certainly is not; we had full employment then.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, the very argument which the Prime Minister used on January 20, 1958 under circumstances—

An hon. Member: You will not forget that.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No one will ever forget it because on that occasion the Prime Minister did something that has never before been done in the annals of parliamentary history. But if it was right for him, it is right for us to ask for these reports. It is the duty of the government to produce these series of documents or series of reports—

Mr. Churchill: What documents? What reports?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): —which indicate the assessment of the economic situation made by the officials of the department.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Hees: Thank heaven.

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me we are entitled as members of the house to draw attention to the tactics being followed by the members of the opposition and the cynical approach—

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

Mr. Churchill: You cannot take it.

An hon. Member: Miss Puddleduck.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I scarcely see how a point of order could have arisen so soon but if the hon. member has one I shall hear it.

Mr. Pickersgill: My point of order is this. I think perhaps Your Honour will find I am rather more perceptive than the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre was because the Minister of Justice got up and started to talk about the tactics used by hon. members. I was severely restricted by Your