

Thursday, April 22nd, 2004

The House met at 1:33 o'clock in the afternoon pursuant to adjournment.

The Speaker announced that upon the advice of the police and the fact that the House Commissionaires were prevented from entering into the building, the Public Galleries would be closed to the public. The Speaker further advised the House that there was a large crowd of demonstrators who were pressing against the doors of the Building for entry into the building and this was of great concern to the police and security personnel.

The Opposition House Leader (Mr. Parsons) rose on a point of privilege alleging that the Opposition were denied access into the building. The Member for Signal Hill-Quidi Vidi (Mr. Harris) also spoke to the matter and expressed the same thought with respect to the point of privilege.

The Honourable the Government House Leader (Mr. Byrne) spoke to the point of privilege and made the argument that all Members of the House should be admitted without hindrance into the precincts of Parliament.

The Speaker recessed the House at 1:45 o'clock in the afternoon to consider the matter.

The Speaker resumed the Chair at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Speaker confirmed his decision to close the Public Galleries because the commissionaires were prevented by the striking workers from gaining entry into the Confederation Building.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Grimes) rose on a point of order and a point of privilege to suggest that Members of the Opposition would not sit in the Chamber unless the press and the public were given entry to the Public Galleries and the Press Gallery.

It was agreed that the House would recess to resolve the problem of the closed Public Galleries.

The Speaker recessed the House at 2:12 o'clock in order to give the commissionaires the opportunity to travel from their homes to the Confederation Building and be escorted into the building. The Speaker suggested he would change his opinion respecting closing the Public Galleries when the commissionaires were in place.

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The Speaker resumed the Chair at 3:49 o'clock.

The Speaker thanked the commissionaires for again coming to the House in order to attend to their duties. The Speaker also warned visitors to the Public Galleries not to participate in the debate.

The Opposition House Leader (Mr. Parsons) rose on a point of order to complain that visitors had not had the opportunity to enter the Public Galleries before the House resumed sitting and were waiting to enter the upstairs lobby.

The House recessed at 3:49 o'clock for a few minutes so that the visitors could be seated in the Public Galleries.

The Speaker resumed the Chair at 3:58 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Honourable the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board (Mr. Sullivan) made a Statement respecting the labour dispute and the strain on the health care system. The Minister indicated that the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and the health care professionals in the system had warned Government that urgent action was necessary.

The Honourable the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board (Mr. Sullivan) gave notice that he would on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a Bill entitled, AAn Act To Provide For The Resumption And Continuation Of Public Services@ (Bill No. 18).

During Oral Questions the Speaker was obliged to remind visitors to the Public Galleries not to participate in the debate.

When Orders of the Day were called, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Grimes) asked leave under Standing Order 36 to move that the Orders of the Day be set aside by means of an adjournment motion to discuss a matter of urgent and public importance.

The Honourable the Government House Leader (Mr. Byrne), the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Parsons) and Member for Signal Hill-Quidi Vidi (Mr. Harris) spoke with respect to the request for an emergency debate under S.O. 36.

The Speaker recessed the House at 4:45 o'clock in order to review the request under Standing Order 36.

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The Speaker resumed the Chair at 5:10 o'clock in the afternoon.

The Speaker ruled that the request for an emergency debate under S.O. 36 was not in order because there was no urgency of debate. There was another opportunity on the Order Paper for debating the labour unrest that being debate on the Budget Speech.

The Opposition House Leader (Mr. Parsons) rose on a point of order to ask when the legislation relating to Bill No. 18 would be ready and whether the House would sit on Monday, St. George's Day. The Honourable the Government House Leader (Mr. Byrne) in his reply indicated the Bill would be debated as soon as it was drafted and approved by Government. The Government House Leader also indicated that the House would sit on Monday, April 26th.

It was moved and seconded that when the House rose it would adjourn until tomorrow, Monday, April 26th at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon.

On motion the House then adjourned accordingly.

A. John Noel, Q.C.,
Clerk of the House of Assembly