

earlier by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) in respect of premature publication of what was alleged to be a confidential document. I will attempt to do so and shall try to keep the House informed as to exactly when I will make that decision.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a point of order arising out of yesterday's question period. It is important to us from the point of view of the operation of the question period. I am concerned with the first questions by the hon. Leader of the Opposition during the oral question period. He was followed by the hon. member for Lisgar dealing with the government's policy respecting appointments to the public service. The questions by the Leader of the Opposition dealt with appointments by orders in council. There was a series of five questions by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. They dealt with the appointment of ex-Liberal candidates, or their spouses, to a variety of positions within the Canadian judiciary, regulatory agencies and the Public Service of Canada. Those questions were allowed to proceed in the normal way. As reported at page 6577 of *Hansard*, the supplementary question by the hon. member for Lisgar was as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Acting Prime Minister. Undoubtedly, this morning's newspaper report also missed the roles of Liberal campaign managers, begmen, PR men and party hacks of various descriptions. My question to the Acting Prime Minister is simply whether it is government policy to create a partisan public service. If not, will he at the earliest opportunity be bringing under the Public Service Commission the bulk of order in council appointments to prevent this from happening?

The minister did not answer the question; he sat down. The next remark in *Hansard* is by you, sir, which reads as follows:

Order, please. The hon. member for New Westminster.

Your Honour followed the customary practice. *Hansard* continues by showing the hon. member for Lisgar saying, "A supplementary, Mr. Speaker." Then Your Honour intervened by saying:

By the most basic definition of supplementary questions, they must arise out of the response to the original question.

With respect, I say that if Your Honour reviews the words of the question put by the hon. member for Lisgar, you will see that two things occurred. The first was the hon. member saying, in the first place, "I have a supplementary question for the Acting Prime Minister," which indicates that that clearly followed as a question supplementary—at least, it could be so construed and in my respectful submission it ought to be so construed—to the question of the Leader of the Opposition. Then the hon. member said, "A supplementary". He was not allowed to stand, because the minister refused to answer. That is what happened on the floor of the House of Commons.

● (1520)

What concerns me is that if your ruling is allowed to stand generally as, "—they must arise out of the response to the original question", then it is open to ministers merely to sit and a line of supplementary questions leading from the main question of a member in the position of the hon. member for Lisgar is ended.

Privilege—Mr. Wagner

The alternative—and Your Honour obviously did not consider this, but I wish you would—is that it is open on the record to ask a supplementary not merely to the question raised by the hon. member for Lisgar but to the original series of questions. There is nothing to indicate otherwise; it simply reads, "A supplementary, Mr. Speaker", to the original series of questions put by the Leader of the Opposition. I know I cannot question the ruling of the Chair and the ruling has been made, but in the event the hon. member for Lisgar and, therefore, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and, therefore, this parliament, was stopped at that point from pursuing a line of questioning.

It is clear we must have some guidelines if we have arrived at the point—and I hope we have not arrived at it—where a minister, by sitting down and refusing to answer, can rule out any further supplementaries a member might have, especially when we are dealing with the broad subject matter of appointments to the public service, regulatory agencies and elsewhere, to which the line of questioning by the hon. member for Lisgar was clearly supplementary.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, on the question raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, I merely want to say very briefly that it is a well understood practice that a minister of the Crown has the option of answering or declining to answer. Ministers usually reply, but sometimes they do not. In this case I deliberately chose not to reply because I thought the question was intemperate and argumentative. The hon. member has another point, namely, the action of the Chair. I am merely re-establishing the point that in certain circumstances ministers may decline to answer, within the practice of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think I can probably reassure both hon. members. The judgment in a particular situation, of course, is always somewhat related to the circumstances. It has always been the practice of the House to permit to Her Majesty's Official Opposition the lead question in any question period, and to follow that with a supplementary questioner to the lead-off questioner for Her Majesty's Official Opposition. That combined questioning force usually lasts for five or six questions. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition exercised his option, which is extended to him on a number of occasions, to use up almost all of those questions, by the Chair permitting him some five consecutive questions. I believe the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton counted five questions by the Leader of the Opposition.

In coming to the point where the hon. member for Lisgar followed, there is always some effect on my handling of the decision by the actual circumstances then present. The hon. member for Lisgar was asking the sixth consecutive question on that subject. He asked a question which in its initial stages might have meant there had been the intention to create a partisan public service. He might have been considered to be argumentative or frivolous in that respect. It seems to me, however, that he corrected that and ended with a serious