

North Atlantic Treaty

and ministers to make statements, called privilege or what have you, as compared with the rights that apply to ordinary members. It seems to me that far too often questions are asked on privilege—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: Government members are applauding. But I may tell them that mistakes are made on the government side, too. Far too often ministers on the government side bring up matters that should be dealt with on the orders of the day, but raise them on questions of privilege. Far too often statements which ministers make on the orders of the day or on motions should be made in debate. As Your Honour knows, this is a matter that was the subject of some discussion in Your Honour's committee on procedure.

Mr. Graydon: It does not appear in the report.

Mr. Knowles: But it was discussed in committee, and the hon. member for Peel knows it. I am surprised that the hon. member for Peel, who objected to the Minister of Fisheries making a provocative statement on motions yesterday, did not object to his own leader making his statement at this time today. I say, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I am not casting a reflection solely on the leader of the opposition. This is something that is done from the front benches on both sides of the house. It would be unfair not to permit the government a reply this morning, and I do not object to a reply being made, but I do hope that at the next session Your Honour will watch this matter in the way in which the house would like to have it watched.

Mr. Drew: Since the hon. member who has just spoken has—well, I really think, substituted himself for Your Honour on this occasion—

Mr. Graydon: Again.

Mr. Drew:—I do feel that I should make some comment in relation to the suggestion he has made that there is some impropriety in the proceeding that has been adopted. I would point out that the procedure I have adopted is in no way incorrect, and it is not similar to the procedure which was discussed yesterday. The procedure which was discussed yesterday was one relating to a particular statement within the house. I am referring to the privileges of the members of this house. I am referring to a fundamental privilege, and that is whether statements of policy and announcements of decisions by the government should be made in the first place before parliament knows anything about them, and in the second place are to be made without informing parliament when parliament is sitting.

[Mr. Knowles.]

As to the question of privilege, I submit, Mr. Speaker, this is the proper place, and I am seeking no special concessions as leader of the opposition. I am simply raising a question in regard to the rights of the members of this house, and may I say to those who applauded the suggestion that such questions should not be raised, that I would hope hon. members here would seek wider opportunities for parliament to exercise its authority rather than seeking to diminish it, as some of them would appear to wish.

Mr. Speaker: Probably it is just as well that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has brought this matter to my attention. However, hon. members will recall that during the present session no opportunity has been given to hon. members to raise grievances. We have not gone into committee of supply or committee of ways and means, and for that reason I have allowed considerable latitude both when motions are called and also on the orders of the day. I am sure it would please very few members if I endeavoured to carry out the rules of the house strictly when hon. members have not an opportunity to raise grievances.

The hon. member referred to an incident which took place yesterday. At that time, when the Minister of Fisheries was making a statement, the hon. member for Peel rose and objected to the statement being made. I think he was quite within his rights in so rising. I, in my very limited wisdom, thought that the statement was almost completed, and it might be just as well if it was completed, but I did point out afterwards that I was giving an opportunity to the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Browne) to make a reply.

I agree very largely with what the hon. member for Peel said, and I stated yesterday that statements from government benches should not be provocative or argumentative; they should be factual statements only. However, we are getting near the end of the session. I do not intend to be any more strict throughout the remaining days of this session than I have been, but I hope that next session we shall be able to carry on the proceedings of the house more in accordance with the rules, but in a manner which will enable me to interpret the rules so that every hon. member will have an opportunity to express his views.

Mr. Pouliot: Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted, I was not surprised, but I had some regret, when I heard you mention your limited wisdom. In fact your wisdom is equal to your humility.