

*Oral Questions*

**An hon. Member:** National unity is not important?

● (1510)

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, when I made the comment in reply to a question that it was I who had suggested that there be a special debate on national unity, I made it in good faith and I still believe it to be an accurate statement. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche) did raise the question on March 10, 1977.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** No; January.

**Mr. MacEachen:** The first reference is quite irrelevant to the question of a special debate—

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** The truth is clearly crucial.

**Mr. MacEachen:**—because the Standing Order 43, as I heard the hon. member read it, made no request for a special debate on the question of national unity.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** No, it was Standing Order 26.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Maybe I did not hear the full motion.

**Mr. Clark:** Ralph will explain it.

**Mr. MacEachen:** On March 30 the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona invited the government to bring before parliament some measure or measures "which will allow members to express their ideas and convictions about ways to hold the country together". He invited the government to bring forward some measures that would allow members to express their views. Maybe that was a suggestion for a debate and if it was, I give the hon. member full credit for it.

I referred to a statement that had been made in another forum by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and I referred to statements made earlier by the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) about the relevance of parliament, and I went on to say it was my desire to bring forward opportunities to deal with special issues, including the question of national unity. That is the first occasion I can find when the matter was dealt with, and I think it justifies the comment I made earlier.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) has done something again today which has rarely been done by persons who carry the responsibility of House leader of their party and that is to refer to private and confidential discussions.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** Nonsense.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I would simply point out to him that if he wishes to continue the valuable forum that we have had as House leaders, then he had better learn a very simple rule and that is, to keep matters confidential.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

**Mr. Clark:** Both sides of your mouth!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise just to ask one question. Would it not be better to get on with the debate rather than argue over who fathered it?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this question because I expected just what we have heard from the government House leader. This is why we are sitting here now instead of being out in our constituencies where we should be—it is because of his mismanagement and the excuse he has given to the House. I want to draw his attention to this, Mr. Speaker. On January 27 I moved, under Standing Order 26—I will not read the whole thing because if government members do not value the time of this House I do, with respect, and that is why I am on my feet now—but in part I said, as reported at page 2448 of *Hansard*:

This question must be transferred from the public arena to its proper place, the chamber of the House of Commons, where it can be debated by the representatives of all the people of Canada.

I am very, very disappointed to hear the government House leader—who is supposed to be guiding the business of this House—make the statement he has today.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Hon. members will realize we are now locked into a disagreement over a representation of events that have taken place. If there is any connection with a question of privilege as I have defined it on previous occasions, I have not heard an argument to that effect as yet. There is a disagreement about the interpretation put upon certain statements and events. That is the way it remains.

**An hon. Member:** He can withdraw.

**Mr. Speaker:** Statements by ministers. The hon. Solicitor General (Mr. Fox).

**Mr. Gillies:** Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I invited discussion on the question of privilege. I have now indicated that it is essentially a disagreement and does not constitute a question of privilege. I have, perhaps regrettably, made a ruling and I have no opportunity now to re-open the question. The hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) seeks the floor on the question of privilege that I have just decided.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Solicitor General.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggan (Mr. Hnatyshyn) on a point of order.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which relates directly to the statement to be made by the