

Privilege

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could give me some idea of what the point of order is. Is it something that should be dealt with before a question of privilege?

Mr. Blaikie: Is the Speaker intending to provide another opportunity for interventions to be made on the matter having to do—

Mr. Speaker: I have said that I am going to consider the matter and I will return to the House. I am not hearing any further argument on it. I will return to the House. There will be opportunity to argue it further at that time, when it is appropriate and convenient.

An hon. member: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member is rising on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, that matter is going to be dealt with and I will return to the House.

If the hon. member is rising on another point of order, I would ask that he wait until I have finished with the questions of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, as you have previously indicated, I gave notice some time ago to the Chair through the Clerk's office that I had the intention of rising on a question of privilege today.

Very briefly, the question of privilege that I want to bring to your attention is in regard to actions on the part of the government which prevent me from doing my job as a member of Parliament.

You will know from pages 70 and 71 of Erskine May's 20th edition, parliamentary privilege is defined as being those privileges and rights that are absolutely necessary for the House to execute its power. The same privileges are enjoyed by members individually.

That is the point I want to bring to your attention very briefly.

Standing Order 39(4) of the House says that members can place up to four Order Paper questions at one time.

The point I want to make to you is that the government is systematically not answering questions that I place on the Order Paper. By not answering the questions that are there, I am unable to ask new questions.

In other words, once the Order Paper is plugged up with four questions, new questions cannot be asked.

• (1510)

I will give you an example. Question No. 113 was placed on the Order Paper on September 18 and was answered last week, the last days of February. There is another question on the Order Paper, No. 111, that dates back to September 16, 1991. There is an indication that all of these questions must be responded to within 45 days. It is now four months since that question was put on the Order Paper and the government refuses to answer it. If the government will not answer these questions, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that I am unable to ask new questions and unable to ask more questions on behalf of my constituents who have sent me here.

If you deem that this is a prima facie point of privilege, I would move the appropriate motion to refer the matter to a parliamentary committee. I would hope, more than anything else, that the government would just obey the Standing Orders, respond to the questions within 45 days so that all of us as parliamentarians can do the job that the people of this country sent us here to do.

Mr. Nunziata: Let's hear your weak response now.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I do want to take a couple of moments to intervene on this point of privilege.

I want to begin by saying that the hon. member does not have a point of privilege. He may have a complaint. He may have some concerns. But I believe—

Ms. Copps: Are you the Speaker now? Make your submission; you are not the Speaker.

Mr. Cooper: No, I am not the Speaker but I believe I am entitled to express the opinion I have just expressed. I do not believe he has a point of privilege.