

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Greene: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Would the minister resume his seat?

Mr. Greene: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Would the minister kindly resume his seat? I have made my ruling on the first question of privilege. The minister may have a second one, to which I will listen.

Mr. Greene: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that inasmuch as the hon. member did advert to the alleged content of my speech, in a very few words I should have the opportunity to clarify that very point—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is the very point I was trying to make. If the minister would refer to the precedents and the numerous citations, he can only come to the conclusion that this cannot be raised as a question of privilege. There could be a lengthy argument, between hon. members and ministers about what was said and what was not said, whether it was government policy or not. I suggest that we give other hon. members, who are anxiously awaiting an opportunity to participate in the question period which is quickly drawing to a close, an opportunity to ask their questions.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a short supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If the hon. member has a short supplementary, we will have a short question of privilege and a short point of order and the question period will be over. I suggest that we try to get on to another subject.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the rules of the House make it very clear that the Acting Prime Minister can be asked whether the statement of the minister is government policy. Now, if the Acting Prime Minister is saying that he has not read the speech and therefore is not prepared to answer, then I will be perfectly satisfied. But for the Acting Prime Minister to evade the question by saying we have to be specific in referring to a speech that covered 35 or 40 pages is a complete equivocation. I submit that the Acting Prime Minister should either

may I congratulate the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on the very forthright and courageous speech that he made at Denver—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has the floor for the purpose of asking a question, not for the purpose of distributing bouquets.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Therefore, I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was stating government policy when he outlined his views respecting the ownership and development of Canadian resources?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the question should be a little more specific than that. To ask whether the government, whether the Prime Minister had—

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): No.

Mr. Sharp: If he is asking me whether the Prime Minister or I read the minister's speech before he made it, the answer is no. If there is some specific point in the speech, some reference he would like to make, I will try to answer the question.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, if I remember correctly there were about 35 or 40 pages in the speech. May I ask whether the policy which the minister outlined, suggesting that there should be Canadian ownership and development of Canadian resources, was a statement of government policy? I am asking the Acting Prime Minister.

Mr. Sharp: Well, Mr. Speaker, you can see the difficulty in which I am placed. The hon. member is paraphrasing the minister. If he could just quote—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are obviously—

Mr. Greene: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as my speech has been referred to by the hon. member, I might indicate what I did say in the speech. I said that we were anxious to have a continuing and growing—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt whether the situation would be helped very much by the minister making a statement. I am not sure he can do this on a question of privilege.