

Oral Questions

whom the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada was not always available to meet. He is right in saying so. What we did ask and again I repeat is whether the Prime Minister is prepared to meet the farmers whom the members of his caucus met last night, whom we met this morning at eleven o'clock and who express the wish to meet the right hon. Prime Minister. I realize that he cannot see them at any time during the day, but if he sets a date, day or time, these people, the farmers, would like to discuss their problems with the Prime Minister of Canada. This is the only thing we ask him, that is whether he would meet the farmers and when.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I often meet delegations throughout the year, and of course a delegation as important as an agricultural one would have priority on my agenda. In fact, every year I have met groups from the Federation of Agriculture or other farming organizations. It will be a matter of finding, if possible, a date that suits both parties.

I merely wish to add, for the benefit of the leader of the Social Credit Party, what I have already told other members of his party, that is to say, that in our party, it is at times as useful, if not more so, to meet, as was the case yesterday, extremely active and energetic members, four ministers who know far more about the subject than I do, since my responsibilities are somewhat broader. The idea is to get the farmers the best audience possible. I thought they had had it yesterday. Now if it simply a matter of having the pleasure of seeing me, of shaking my hand, Mr. Speaker, I should be happy to meet them. If they are still here, I shall see them when I leave the House shortly. As for the presentation of arguments, I believe that was done yesterday. I trust my hon. members and ministers to give me a reliable report on what occurred. I will merely add that if the leader of the Social Credit Party wants to welcome all the delegations that come to Ottawa and I must meet, I shall be pleased to oblige and will ask him why, last week, he did not meet the eight bishops who came to Ottawa to discuss serious problems. Why did the Social Credit Party of Canada not meet them? Did they not have time to meet those bishops and religious leaders? Mr. Speaker, one cannot do everything one would like to do in a day. We try to share the responsibilities as best we can.

[*English*]

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A few moments ago there was a question from the hon. member for Bonavista-Trinity-Conception (Mr. Rooney) about the Canada Summer Games.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether the House would permit me to hear the point so I can decide whether there is a point of order.

Mr. Lalonde: Your Honour ruled at the time that the question had previously been asked. That is true. I think it was asked last Friday of the Acting Prime Minister, who replied that he was not aware of the situation but would look into it. Therefore no answer was provided to that question. I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that today when the hon. member raised the question he was asking for information that was not available to the House last

Friday, and therefore the hon. member should have been entitled to ask the question again.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Broadbent: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Speaking on behalf of my colleagues we would willingly give the minister an opportunity to answer, and I hope the House does, since we asked that very serious question on Friday.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The fact is that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has raised a point of order which is well taken. The test is not, as I have phrased it, whether or not the question has been asked previously; the test is whether the question has been answered previously. The fact is that a minister of the Crown undertook to look into the matter and to bring in an answer later. If I took that as a non-answer in this particular situation I would have a number of grievances on my hands, something which I have faced before.

Perhaps the best solution would be for the hon. member tomorrow to put the question to the same minister who undertook to give an answer, or at least by way of some preamble to indicate that he is seeking an answer which was previously sought. The custom of the House is that if a member, having asked a question on Friday, is expecting to be given an answer today, the courtesy of the House ought to be extended in such a way that the member who asked the question originally should be the one who should ask the question the second time.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. My question of privilege relates to the question of whether privilege applies in a given set of circumstances. I want to determine if, in a matter that does not relate to government business or parliamentary affairs, any parliamentary or statutory privilege lies in conversations between ministers of the Crown and/or the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

My understanding is that the Speaker must rule on whether a prima facie question actually exists before a motion is framed for reference to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Therefore I am giving your Honour notice now that I desire to frame such a motion, but I would ask the Chair to give consideration to whether or not such a motion is receivable.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member is referring to any lack of response to a question put during the question period—

Mr. Lawrence: No, sir, I am not.

Mr. Speaker:—then, of course, it is the right of any minister to refuse to answer any question during the question period. If the hon. member was referring to that, then no question of privilege arises because there is no obligation on a minister ever to make any answer to any question in the question period. If the hon. member has something else in mind, perhaps he might put it to the Chair.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the fact that ministers of the Crown are pleading privilege in answer to questions during the question period. I under-