

that. I do try to cut them short when they are too long. However, when they are too short, I am afraid I cannot ask ministers to make them longer, because that is not, of course, within the purview of my responsibilities. I try to keep everyone brief.

Today was a particularly difficult day when some questions, not all of them, were quite short. As a matter of fact, we heard from many questioners on the opposition side, which pleases me because I have many customers on my list waiting to be recognized in the question period. I feel very bad when I walk out of the question period after having allowed questions from only eight or nine hon. members in the opposition. I like to satisfy as many members as possible. I want to remind hon. members that it is in their interest to make their questions short so that everyone will have a chance.

● (1510)

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on the same question. It is also in the interest of ministers to keep their answer short in order to allow those customers, as you call them, to put their questions. The specific instance to which I want to draw the attention of the Chair this afternoon is that the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) was cut off in the middle of asking his question and he did not get the answer from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Surely he should have been allowed to complete that question. Members should not be cut off halfway through their question and be asked to put a question which they are in the middle of putting.

Madam Speaker: I stand to be corrected, but I think the commotion took place when the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) failed to get an answer to one of his questions. I, of course, cannot force another member to answer a question. He failed to receive an answer to his first question and then went on to his second question. I think the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) will recognize that I did give the hon. member for St. John's East some leeway in asking his second question. Obviously he was going beyond what is usually accepted in the course of asking questions.

It is only to maintain decorum and good order in the House that I intervene in these circumstances. I am not trying to restrict the freedom of members to express themselves. On the contrary, all members want to express themselves. The more I try to keep some members' questions short during question period, the more members will be able to exercise that freedom to express themselves.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I rise on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). I would point out to him that his example was particularly unfelicitous. He is complaining about long answers from this side. The hon. member for Yukon will recall that the question asked of me by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) was preceded by a very long string of statistics. The question was, and I believe I can quote it almost verbatim, "and is the Prime Minister attempting to

shirk his responsibilities?" That was the question. My answer was no. No, I am not attempting to shirk my responsibilities.

Madam Speaker: All right, I am sorry.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member for St. John's East then rose and said—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I understand the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) desire to put the record straight, but I am afraid that we should not enter into debate on the question and answer period. Of course, this is not the time to do it. There is ample time to do that on other occasions.

MR. CLARK—REMARKS OF MR. PINARD RESPECTING MR. KING

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I also rise in the interests of setting the record straight of contributing to what I think Your Honour has called decorum and order in the House. We have a situation in relation to the hon. member for Okanagan-Similkameen (Mr. King) in which there stands on the record of the House, in the words of the government House leader's statements about the Member of Parliament for Okanagan-Similkameen that are not true. The Speaker has ruled and has read from the ruling of the Deputy Speaker that the House must accept the word of the Member of Parliament for Okanagan-Similkameen, who was indeed in the House when the question was put. By accepting that word—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clark: If I may come to my point of order—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nielsen: Hear him out.

Mr. Clark: May I be heard?

Madam Speaker: No. I remind the right hon. member that I did ask the hon. member for Yukon not to comment further on this particular question which was raised by the hon. member for Okanagan-Similkameen (Mr. King). The record, I believe, is straight. Divergence of views about statements which are contradictory in this House are quite frequent. That is what debate is all about. Often we have on the record contradictory statements made by one member or another, and it is quite normal. There is a government party and an opposition party. Often their views are completely opposed. Therefore, it is not abnormal to have contradictory statements. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) has made a statement. I suppose he stands by that statement. If he does not want to correct it, that is up to him, not to anyone else, to decide.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker—

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to come to my point of order, which is precisely that there is a disorder in the proceedings of the House in that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) has made a statement that