

*Point of Order—Mr. Hnatyshyn*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Essentially, we are extending the question period as though two further supplementary questions had been put to the hon. parliamentary secretary, and this is really no different than if the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) had been here and had had further supplementary questions put to him. I can understand the concern of the House over the nature of this procedure, but, nevertheless, it is not a point of order. It is really an extension of the question period, but there is a limit as to how far we can go.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I accept the judgment which you just made. However, it seems to me that a matter of this seriousness ought to have been stated in the House by a minister of the Crown.

## MR. HNATYSHYN—ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

**Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, the point raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) underlines the point which I wanted to raise and which was raised earlier in a motion under Standing Order 43 by my colleague, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald), relating to the role, function, and position of parliamentary secretaries in this House.

Yesterday we had the situation where the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Miss Nicholson) stood in this House with respect to suggested anticipated policy concerning equalization payments. My understanding is that when a parliamentary secretary stands in this House and states a policy of the government, that it is attributable to the government. Yet we have the situation now where we have no explanation, and there has been no attempt to make a statement on motions as to whether or not the position put forward by the hon. member for Vaudreuil, (Mr. Herbert) is in fact the position of the government with respect to the abolition of the principles of equalization.

If we are going to have a system of parliamentary secretaries in this House, we have to know whether they are speaking for the government or whether they are speaking *ex cathedra* on some other basis, through some inspiration that we have no basis upon which to attach any method of attribution to the government. I suggest to you, sir, that if you think that the parliamentary secretaries are answering for the government, then we should be entitled to an explanation, particularly in the case of the matter raised by the hon. member for Vaudreuil with respect to the motion he placed yesterday, which apparently is government policy.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Naturally I am only prepared to accept that thesis when the hon. member is prepared to tell me that every application put by a member of his party, pursuant to Standing Order 43, is the policy of his party.

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

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

**Mr. Clark:** That is nonsense, Mr. Speaker!

[Mr. Collette.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. There are rules of this House which give to every member the opportunity, as a privately elected member of this House, to intervene, put forward motions, notices of motions, bills or other matters. Those rights all operate to the benefit of a private member of the House. Whether or not a member in this particular instance is taking advantage of that rule in one way or another is a matter which can be debated. If and when the matter comes to a debate, it can be discussed, but, in fact, it does not constitute a matter of order in this House.

The point was raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) as a point of order. I think that he will recognize that he is perfectly entitled to make the conjecture that he has, as is the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald) entitled to make that conjecture. It is not a matter of disorder for any member to take advantage of Standing Order 43 in any way, and I cannot find that any disorder or point of order now attaches to the point raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar.

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Very briefly, sir—

**Some hon. Members:** Order, order!

**Mr. Clark:** I heard order being called from across the floor. It is not yet the prerogative of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) to set rules of this House. I think it may well be, in light of your remarks in response to the points raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn), that there is perhaps not a complete understanding of the points that the member for Saskatoon-Biggar was making. The difficulty posed for us here is that at one moment a parliamentary secretary is wearing the guise of a spokesman for the government, and at another moment—and there is no way by which we can distinguish what hat he is wearing—he stands in the guise of a private member.

It is well established practice in this House, honoured particularly on this side, that members of parliament are free to speak their views and to raise points that are of concern to them. The question relates to when is a member of parliament, who is also a parliamentary secretary, speaking not for himself or herself but for the Government of Canada. That is the difficulty that we have when, as today in the case of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Postmaster General (Mr. Collette), a statement was made that is apparently government policy, and yesterday in the case of the hon. member for Vaudreuil, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Herbert), a statement of devastating consequences to this confederation—made apparently in a private capacity.

I suggest to you, sir, with all respect, that this is a very difficult question for this House, the question as to whether or not these people, who at one moment are private members and at another moment are spokesmen for the government, are, when they make those statements, speaking for the government or for themselves. That, I suggest, is a matter which