

capacity as chairman, he rose three times. I would have thought that the natural inclination would have been to see the chairman and permit him to respond to the question.

● (1520)

Therefore, I suggest that future difficulties might be avoided if Your Honour followed that ordinary and customary practice of recognizing the individual on the other side to whom the question is addressed.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I will be brief. As I said the other day, I never quite understand how we get into these discussions. However, in reading Beuchesne I draw certain conclusions. First of all I want to point out that Citation 366 of Beuchesne states that:

Questions may be asked of private members only under strict limitations. Virtually the only question possible would refer to a committee of which the member is the chairman.

I assume from reading that, that since the question is allowed to be asked, the answer is allowed to be given. I begin from the premise that if it is legal within the laws of the House of Commons to ask the question, then surely it must be reasonable and equally legal for the hon. member who is being asked to be able to answer.

The second point I submit for Your Honour's consideration is that the reference made by the hon. House leader for the government is in my judgment and, I hope, in the judgment of the Chair, an inappropriate reference. As previously indicated by the House leader for the government, as reported in *Hansard* of March 17, 1944, at page 327, Mr. Speaker ruled privately that a member may not seek, by means of a question to the chairman, to interfere in the proceedings of a select committee by suggesting a particular subject for inquiry. That, of course, was not before the House today. As I listened to the debate, there was no intention at any time to seek, by way of a question to a select committee—or, for that matter, any other committee, assuming that a standing committee is a select committee—to alter the terms of reference or to suggest that a matter not legitimately before the committee should be placed before the committee.

Therefore, I submit to Your Honour, if I may, that that reference is quite inappropriate, does not apply to the situation before you, and therefore is of no value in this debate.

Mr. Nielsen: That does not apply in Canada.

Mr. Deans: Therefore, I simply ask Your Honour to consider the proposition that if, within the Standing Orders of the House of Commons and the precedents established in the House of Commons, it is deemed appropriate that an hon. member on either side can pose a question to a committee chairman under certain circumstances, and if those circumstances are not in any way deviated from, then it should be equally understood that the chairman of the committee should be given the option to answer; that the only person who could determine whether the chairman ought or ought not to answer should be the chairman of the committee at that point of time; and that if the chairman wishes to relinquish the right to

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answer to the President of the Privy Council or to the government House leader, then that may well be the prerogative of that chairman at that time.

However, under the circumstances, I would suggest that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) and House leader for the government, did in fact interfere with the orderly conduct of the business by repeatedly rising to answer a question not directed to him, when the hon. member to whom the question was directed was obviously willing and able to answer it himself.

Madam Speaker: Regarding the question first posed by the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants (Mr. Nowlan) at the beginning of this discussion, as to whether or not the chairman should have answered that question, it is true, as stated in Beuchesne, that a chairman of a committee may answer a question in the House about the activities of that committee. That citation, of course, is quite acceptable; but there are other citations which could have been quoted which state that a minister or, for that matter, a chairman of a committee, is not obliged to answer.

Mr. Nielsen: But he was trying to answer.

Madam Speaker: The Chair has no authority, whatsoever to force a minister or, for that matter, a chairman of a committee—

Mr. Siddon: But he stood up.

Madam Speaker: —to answer a question in the House. I have no authority whatsoever to force anyone to answer any question put to him in the House.

Mr. Lawrence: Good grief!

Madam Speaker: The issue in the minds of some is that the chairman of that committee was gagged by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard), who chose to answer the question instead of the chairman of the committee.

Mr. Lawrence: No, no. He was recognized by Your Honour to answer.

Madam Speaker: If the President of the Privy Council wants to interpret a question as being related to the business of the House, it is not for the Chair to say that it is not related to the business of the House. In my mind, since the President of the Privy Council did rise to answer that question, he was perfectly justified in answering it.

Two people rose to answer that question. I recognized neither, and I want to make that quite clear. I never recognize one minister or another in order that he may answer a question which comes from the opposition benches. Hon. members will notice that I never, never announce the name of a minister during question period, except following an interruption when I have to call members to order and I give the minister the floor for the second time. However, I do not choose the ministers who will be answering the questions which are put to the government.