

Madam Speaker: Indeed I must tell the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields) that there is no ground there for a question of privilege. In my opinion it was not a question of privilege but rather a point of order. I understand the hon. member did not appreciate the interpretation given by the minister regarding the questions asked by the opposition. The hon. member has made his remark. He rose on a point of order. Still I cannot really accept it as a valid point of order. I can understand the fact that the hon. member did not appreciate this comment but anyway these are things that can happen during question period.

[English]

MR. MACKEY—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF REMARKS OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, I want to raise a brief point of order which has reference to what the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) said. Perhaps you can look at the blues and check what the minister said tomorrow. Maybe the minister did not mean it the way it came over, and perhaps there was so much noise, as you have pointed out, and if I contributed to it, my apologies. But I understood the minister to say, in effect, that if members wanted questions, the place to ask them might not be during the question period.

I can understand, depending on which side of the House one sits, that sometimes questions can be embarrassing. If that proposition is allowed to stand without being underlined or clarified, that is to say, that the question period in the House of Commons is not a very suitable or the most appropriate place to ask questions, then that is a very marked departure from parliamentary tradition.

I just want to ask you, Madam Speaker, to check the blues and perhaps ask the minister to check his answer, because as I understood him the effect was that if members wished to have answers to questions, the question period may not be the best place. If that is not the best place, I would like to know what is the best place.

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, obviously the hon. member misunderstood the answer. What the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) said was that he was not referring to all the questions in general but to one specific question that was asked of him, and that it should have been put on the order paper. I think he was right in saying so. I also think that on the principle, as the hon. member well knows, he did not have to answer any of the questions, but he did answer in the best way he could.

● (1520)

Obviously there is no point of order in what the hon. member has just raised. Ministers are free to answer and the minister did answer well. When he stated that some of the questions should not have been asked during question period, he was right in saying that because most of the questions asked of him should have been placed on the order paper.

Privilege—Mr. Anguish

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: I believe that I was able to follow adequately what went on during this exchange in question period. I can check *Hansard* as the hon. member has requested, but it seems to me that the hon. minister said about one, or perhaps even two of the questions, that he needed additional information since the issue was rather complex and he would rather reply at another time than during question period.

I do not have to remind the hon. member that, in any case, the minister can choose not to reply to any question. He answered in his own way today. The hon. member may not be satisfied, but I cannot force the hon. minister to give another answer.

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[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. ANGUISH—REMISSION OF TAXES TO NORTHERN RESIDENTS—QUESTION ASKED BY MEMBER FOR THUNDER BAY-NIPIGON

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege regarding certain behaviour during the question period this afternoon. The question asked by the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Nipigon (Mr. Masters) was obviously a set-up. It was read from a piece of paper, and when responding the minister read the reply.

I have here a copy of a press release issued by the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Rompkey). On it is stated "Not to be released before 3 p.m. Thursday, June 26, 1980". Therefore, it was a direct cover-up by the Minister of National Revenue. The minister did not want those in the opposition parties to respond to the announcement he made about remitting taxes to residents in isolated northern areas. There are many concerns we would like to raise about that. Therefore, the government are covering up and taking away our privilege as members of Parliament to act on behalf of our constituents and express our concerns about measures imposed by the government which directly concern us.

In connection with that, I also notice that according to the House plan, members opposite do not sit in their proper places. Therefore, either the House plan should be changed or members should sit in their proper seats. The hon. member for Thunder Bay-Nipigon sits in the wrong place, as does the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. MacBain), making it hard to identify them.

That is the first question of privilege. The second is that we should have an opportunity to respond to ministerial statements.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. member admits that he is dealing with two questions of privilege at the same time. I can only entertain one.