

*Point of Order—Mr. Clark*

er, namely, that the effect of the resolution which has been accepted by both the House of Commons and the Senate is to compel the committee to submit its report not later than December 9, 1980, and as far as I am concerned, such is the position of the government at this time, and we have no intention of changing it.

[English]

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, if I remember correctly, in your remarks you indicated there was a dilemma for the Chair in that you do not have the power to decide on a matter that was raised in the other place, the Senate. That other place is now occupied by three ministers of the Crown who are making statements of government policy on which they cannot be questioned here, and on which government ministers opposite will not provide either response or clarification. You have indicated there is a dilemma.

I am rising at this time simply to reserve my right tomorrow, or at some later time, to file and raise a question of privilege relating to the limitation upon the privileges of members of the House of Commons to obtain information relating to the business of the Government of Canada confirmed by ministers of the Crown who are members of this House. I think this is a very real question which I have raised with respect to our ability to deal with answers which are given in another chamber by responsible ministers—ministers who are not accountable in any way to us. That breach of our privilege, or the potential breach of it, is further aggravated by the persistent reaction and response of the government House leader, who says he does not know what his cabinet colleague has been saying, and his persistent refusal to respond to questions in this House. So, I simply rise at this time to reserve my right to raise a question of privilege at a later time.

[Translation]

**Madam Speaker:** I only wish to remind the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that I did not mention a dilemma. I categorically stated that I was not in a position to rule on anything going on in the Senate, as the Standing Orders only give me the authority to make rulings pertaining to procedure in the House of Commons.

[English]

**Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Madam Speaker, with respect to this issue it seems to me it has been made unnecessarily complicated by dragging in the Senate. Let us forget about the Senate altogether. The fact is that a minister of the government, whose name is Hon. Raymond Perrault, has made a statement somewhere other than in this House. It does not matter where he made it. Traditionally we have the right in this House to ask the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) if a statement made by a minister represents government policy. Therefore in the absence of the Prime Minister I submit that we have the right to ask the government House leader whether the Hon. Raymond Perrault, who is a member of the cabinet and a minister of the Crown, was uttering government policy when he said that the government would

entertain the idea of a change in the final date assigned to the committee.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pinard:** There are two things, Madam Speaker. First, a question of that nature should be asked during the oral question period and not through a point of order. Second, in answer to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) I said earlier, responding to a question put by the Progressive Conservative Party that I was not aware of the remark that Senator Perrault was alleged to have made. And I do not know any more now than I did five minutes ago. Hence I cannot make any comment. All I can say is that government policy is in keeping with the answer that I gave earlier to the hon. member from his party and to the Leader of the Opposition. Consequently, Madam Speaker, I do not think I could have a more open or frank attitude.

[English]

**Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona):** Madam Speaker, I would like to add something to this point of order which has come up.

**Madam Speaker:** No, I am sorry, it is not a point of order. I have said I would not recognize any more speakers on this subject, which is not a point of order. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has spoken but he had another purpose in rising and taking the floor.

**Mr. Kilgour:** It is not a point of order, Madam Speaker, it is with respect to the business of the House. It is my understanding of Parliament that traditionally the only member of the government in the Senate is the government leader there. We now have a situation where Canada has gone beyond that. I admit that our government went beyond that last year for electoral reasons as well. I submit it is a convention of this House that matters concerning government ministers which are raised in that House are replied to by the President of the Privy Council. Therefore, the very fundamental question which Your Honour has to answer is whether or not the government House leader can decide whether he will tell us if an answer made in the other place is valid here. That was pointed out by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

I submit that unless our system of parliamentary government is to be changed fundamentally—in which case we might have ten cabinet ministers appointed in the other place who do not have to answer any questions in this House—the Chair should decide what will be the future convention on this point in this House.

● (1530)

**Madam Speaker:** Ministers are free to answer in any way they wish, and the Chair has no authority to force them to answer questions or to tell them in what way they should answer questions. My feeling today is that the minister did answer the question. The hon. member is not satisfied with the answer and does not like it, but that is not for me to decide.