

Question Period Procedure

case today where I was on my feet and both the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) were talking, they were not talking into active microphones. If it happened otherwise, it is extraordinary. When this microphone here is on, the other microphones are de-activated. In any event, it is a legitimate point of concern and one we should watch.

I have no difficulty with the concept that if I get to my feet and my microphone is activated, the others are de-activated. I think everyone agrees with that basic concept. It would be unfair by that action to be able to precipitate the discontinuance of one microphone on one side of the House and activate the other. We shall check that.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I wish to elaborate briefly on the same point. It might be useful for Your Honour to review a tape of today's question period, the television tape of the House proceedings. When one of my colleagues to my left, I forget which one, was asking a question, the minister in question began to stand up. I was watching. My colleague's microphone was turned off and then turned back on. It had nothing to do with Your Honour. I do not believe you were standing at the time.

The concern I have is now that television has been introduced into the House of Commons, if this happens it is impossible to have a proper electronic Hansard of the proceedings of parliament. It is impossible for a microphone across the House to capture what is being said by a member on this side if his microphone has been turned off. This was an instance which I think will show on the tape where Your Honour did not stand, but the microphone was temporarily turned off and turned back on. That might assist Your Honour in your work.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I want to support you in the comments you made earlier about the way in which you would deal with points of order and questions of privilege during the question period. As I recall the rules, when we made the changes that put the Standing Order 43 motions at two o'clock and the questions following not later than 2:15, we made a great reform in this House. Up until that time there had been a question period of a certain length. It was always very difficult to determine when that question period came to an end. The intervention of points of order and questions of privilege sometimes resulted in the question period extending for a great deal longer than apparently was provided for in the rules.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, we will not revert to that situation. I believe it is important for order in this House that the question period should end at a particular time. That being so, I hope that you will follow your present practice of considering points of order and questions of privilege after the question period is over.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I support the idea of taking points of order and questions of privilege following the question period. It is more orderly. I would, however, ask Your Honour

[Mr. Speaker.]

to give some consideration to this particular period. It has now gone on for an hour.

A number of matters have been raised. The House would be better served if these matters were discussed privately in Your Honour's chambers rather than in the House. Many problems affect Your Honour's particular jurisdiction. I have been very satisfied with Your Honour's decisions, something that was not always true with some of your predecessors.

I suggest that Your Honour be a little more firm with regard to disallowing pseudo points of order or pseudo points of privilege. I suggest it would be more orderly if Your Honour invited an hon. member to make his point directly. Many of these points of order and questions of privilege do not serve much purpose being raised in this House. I am sure that if Your Honour errs with regard to a certain matter, you will be pleased to make a correction.

I strongly urge Your Honour to be more firm and maybe rap the knuckles of those who raise questions of privilege which are in fact no questions of privilege.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I simply asked about the rules that apply during the course of the question period. My purpose is not to suggest that the previous rule is better than the current rule under which we have been operating. The point which is important is that the rules were arrived at and instituted by agreement.

There are ancillary considerations that flow from the question of what rules apply, whether we have re-instituted these rules in the third session or not. I simply ask Your Honour to allow us to reserve our right, because this is an important matter of procedure, so that we can come to some understanding by virtue of the agreement that existed before. It is important for us to be able to understand the ramifications of what has transpired. I ask Your Honour to allow us to reserve our right so that we can find out precisely the terms of the order and agreement entered into, and whether they still apply.

Mr. Speaker: There is nothing I can do or say today to take away the hon. member's right. If he wants to ask the House to go back to the other method, he ought to put his arguments forward.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADA EVIDENCE ACT

MEASURE TO ADMIT EVIDENCE RESPECTING CRIMINAL
CONVICTIONS

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-410, to amend the Canada Evidence Act.

Some hon. Members: Explain.