

French language in Parliament every second day of sitting?

Of course, with my French education, I put the words 'His Honour' before 'Mr. Speaker'. There was another question, reading as follows:

4. If so, from whom and upon what grounds?

Questions 3 and 4 were returned to me with the following note:

Dear Mr. Wilson:

His Honour the Speaker thought the above part of your question somewhat irregular as being put ironically and as not arising out of the main question. So I inserted the principal question, with this latter part eliminated for the present.

T. B. Flint,
Clerk.

What is the reason that it is not on the Order Paper? The question may be irregular or it may be ironical—I have nothing to say about that for the moment; but it seems to me that, according to all precedents, your judgment, Mr. Speaker, should be rendered in this House anyway. I ask that this question No. 3 be put on the Orders of the Day. If you say that the question is irrelevant or ironical, I want this House to pass judgment upon your decision. That is all I have to say at the moment, and, as a member of this House, I ask you now, that this question be put upon the Orders of the Day and that the House pass judgment upon it whether it is ironical or not.

Mr. SPEAKER: The only question involved is the question of privilege. Is it the privilege of a member of this House to ask questions? I have only to say in reply to that—

Mr. WILSON: Would Mr. Speaker allow me just one question? Is it the privilege of a member to go to the Clerk and put a question in his hands in order that that question may be placed upon the Order Paper? It is on that question that I want your ruling, and not as to the propriety or impropriety of the question itself. It seems to me that the House must decide this point. Was it the right of Dr. Flint, for instance, not to put this question on the Orders of the Day? Let us be frank. If the question has not been put on the Orders of the Day, has it been submitted to you; or do I assume too much, Mr. Speaker? I do not think I do. Until I get further information I assume that the question has been withheld from the Order Paper upon your orders. I want to know whether it is the privilege of a member to put a question on the Orders of the Day or whether the matter

[Mr. C. A. Wilson.]

is controlled outside of the House of Commons.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question involved is one of privilege. Is it the privilege of a member to put a question? I quote again rule No. 37, which is one of the clearest rules in the book and the rule that governs as to the subjects upon which questions may be asked:

Questions may be put to any ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs.

As it is the right and duty of the Speaker for the time being to see that no improper questions are put on the Orders of the Day, this question was submitted, of course, to the Speaker's judgment, and, in my judgment, it did not come within the rules. Or questions may be put:

—and to other members, relating to any Bill, motion, or other public matter connected with the business of the House, in which such members may be concerned.

The question did not seem to me to come within these rules. I have in my hands Mr. Speaker Peel's Decisions in the House of Commons in England, and in this book I find the following statement:

Mr. Speaker discourages the practice of asking questions based on statements in the public press. It is desirable that members should undertake the responsibility of the questions thus put. A member who puts a question is responsible for the facts alleged therein.

If a question contains a statement, the member who makes it should vouch for its being a fact.

With reference to the duty of the Clerk of the House, I have not the authority under my hand at the moment, but the clerk has to consult with the Speaker in reference to any question that is handed in to him and that he thinks is irregular. In my judgment this question was irregular, and I notified the clerk to consult with the hon. member (Mr. Wilson) for the reasons which I have already given.

Mr. C. A. WILSON: If I understand your statement, Mr. Speaker, the report from Dr. Flint to myself was a correct one, and therefore this question, according to your judgment should not have been put upon the Order Paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have not looked over the report of the clerk; consequently I could not express an opinion.

Mr. WILSON: There it is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have just now had a copy of it handed to me by the clerk. He submitted the question to me before the opening of this sitting of the House, and I