

Statements by Ministers

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Minister has been recognized under Statements by Ministers. It is perfectly in order for him to make a statement.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned the name which the Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) wanted to know. I therefore hope that he is satisfied with the answer. I simply wanted to set the record straight through a point of order, and I have managed to do that. The Opposition is taken by surprise because we can come up with quick answers as I have done today.

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I was paying close attention when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) took the floor. He said very clearly in French that he was seeking the floor on a point of order, and he spoke to that point of order, not under the item Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House were paying close attention. The Minister rose on a point of order and I would ask that—I would ask that you keep that in mind before making a ruling. We were paying close attention. He sought to be recognized on a point of order and not under the item Statements by Ministers, that was obvious. That is why, before you make a ruling, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to consult with your advisers at the table.

[English]

Some Hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is true that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) sought to be recognized on a point of order. The Chair proceeded to Statements by Ministers and very explicitly called "Statements by Ministers".

Mr. Pinard: It was a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Nevertheless, the Chair called "Statements by Ministers" and if the Minister chose to be recognized at that time, it was a statement as far as the Chair is concerned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The practice has been that an equal amount of time has been allowed for Hon. Members on the other side of the House to comment if they wish.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is clear in the rules that a point of order can be made at any time and that is exactly what the Minister did. He did not seek to be recognized under Statements by Ministers but he stood in his place seeking permission to be heard on a point of order

and he was recognized as such. Therefore, he was not making a statement. He was recognized on a point of order and that can be done at any time. I submit very respectfully, Mr. Speaker, that what he said was not said under Statements by Ministers but was said after he sought to be recognized on a point of order, which can be done at any time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair would ask the indulgence of the House. The Chair has attempted to be as careful and as fair about the matter as possible under the circumstances. It is true that I called "Statements by Ministers". It is equally true that the Minister insisted that he was rising on a point of order. The Minister made a short intervention. I would hope that there might be a disposition by the House to simply let the matter rest at this point.

Some Hon. Members: No!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In fairness to everyone concerned, the Chair has attempted to deal with this matter as a statement but the Minister insists that he put it as a point of order. In fairness to everyone concerned, I would hope that if there is to be any further intervention, it does not exceed the time that was taken by the Minister in making a very brief statement.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to make two points. First, it is the view of this side of the House that you, Sir, are in charge of the proceedings in this Chamber and not the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Second, let me say that we regret in particular that the Government did not choose to take the opportunity you provided today, Mr. Speaker, to begin again the practice of announcing government policy through the use of ministerial statements on motions. There has not been a statement on motions in the House in the last four years, and that is a travesty that undermines the authority of the House of Commons and makes it far more difficult for the public of Canada to know what is going on or for Parliament to hold the Government in any way accountable.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) has now discovered who in his Department is responsible for the Canadian Ownership Account and has now discovered who in his Department was responsible for the purchase of Petrofina. He did not know who was responsible for that multimillion dollar expenditure. Now that he does know, I would hope that later in the debate he would take the House of Commons into his confidence. If I may say so, I hope the Government will continue the practice of making statements on motions—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In effect, what has happened is that the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) has commented on the statement made by the Minister. This can be shown by reading *Hansard*. I would hope there would be a disposition at this point to proceed to the next item of business.