

preceded Your Honour gave the discretion to parliamentary secretaries to rise in this House and put questions to ministers other than their own, because they carried no responsibility for another department.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege—

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No. I am speaking on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I might remind the honourable member that we are dealing with a question of privilege by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay) at the moment.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The views of the honourable member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) on this subject are well known. We have argued this question before previous Speakers. I would ask Your Honour to allow the House to debate this point and to give a ruling on a future occasion. Then this whole question could be aired, as it should, because it involves the rights of private members who, despite the fact that they are appointed parliamentary secretaries, have no responsibility in the ministry, do not take that oath and owe responsibility to their ministers alone and to the Prime Minister. Through the traditions of this House they have been allowed to pose questions to other ministers for the past 12 years.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Earlier in today's session Your Honour had occasion to make rulings with regard to supplementary questions. Those rulings made some of us unhappy, but they were rulings by the Chair and we accepted them. If there were freedom in the House to challenge Your Honour on every occasion when an honourable member thinks he has been discriminated against, it would be a very chaotic place indeed.

I am surprised at the attitude of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), who should know better and know that from time to time in this House members of the opposition have challenged, at times successfully, the right of parliamentary secretaries to ask questions. Your Honour has put before us your particular position in regard to the discretion which is given to the Chair in respect of certain situations. Your Honour has exercised this discretion in various ways. You have seen fit—in my opinion and in the opinion of many of us in this House, quite properly—to exercise this discretion against the right of parliamentary secretaries to ask questions. There are very good reasons behind this.

I suggest it would be in the best interests of this House if the Minister of Finance and all members of the government would accept that decision, and then later during this or another session there might be a debate on the rules, when the matter could be raised. But Your Honour has made a decision, we have accepted it and the government should accept it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) says, quite properly, that he has been here 13 years. I have been here as long as that.

Privilege—Mr. J.-P. Guay

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Yes, you have.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is the first time since the notorious pipeline debate that I have witnessed—the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) laughs. He has done more to destroy parliament than any other person.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1520)

Mr. Diefenbaker: I witnessed what took place in 1956 when ministers, not satisfied with the rulings being given, decided to undermine them. I have not forgotten; and it is more than 18 years ago since that that took place. Sir, you have made a ruling. We will not always agree with your rulings, but authority does not permit challenge in this House—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker:—either directly by vote or indirectly by government representatives endeavouring to bring about an alteration after a ruling had been made. I have been here and seen Mr. Speakers come and go. You have discharged your duties in a way that has done credit to you and to parliament, and I deeply resent the attitude of ministers of the Crown, activated and encouraged by the Prime Minister who should be upholding parliament. The ruling is made, it stands. In no case should Your Honour permit himself to be trammelled by the desires of a government that, not satisfied with its majority, now wants to control Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this question because it is fundamental one. It affects the rights and privileges of a certain select group of people in this House. It seems to me that any ruling which would prohibit a parliamentary secretary from asking questions in this House would demote parliamentary secretaries to second-class status. We have constituents to represent, and I think that all members of the House—including those on the other side—would respect a parliamentary secretary who was trying to perform that function and the duty we have to our constituents, as do other members of the House.

The second point I wish to make is that in reading the rules of procedure of this House I am at a loss to find anything that constitutes prohibition against a parliamentary secretary asking questions.

An hon. Member: Mr. Speaker has ruled.

Mr. Cafik: I think Mr. Speaker can speak for himself.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Be that as it may, I am anxious, as I have said, to hear the views of those who have expressed a desire to comment on the subject, which is of some importance. I have stated my position, and I would appreciate it if hon. members who wish to contribute would do so, because I am anxious to hear them. I only