

• (1440)

Is the Hon. Member for Gloucester rising on a point of order?

Mr. Breau: On a related point of order, because it deals with the way this exchange period will work. Shall I make the comment and ask for clarification now? I wonder if the Chair could elucidate as to the kind of discipline that will exist. Will it be the kind that exists in the regular Question Period where questions and answers should be short? I believe the intent of the exchange period is that it be short. The experience today has been that both questions and answers have been too long. I wonder if the same discipline should apply as applies to the Question Period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is probably not a good idea for the Chair to attempt to give hypothetical rulings, but I think I should indicate that one of the other Acting Speakers and myself have had occasion to discuss this today, that is to say, the two of us who are on duty today.

I will begin by again quoting the Committee report, which reads:

Your Committee envisages that exchanges which will take place will be short and sharp.

In an attempt to give some conceptual framework to that, my own feeling is that Members might like to consider a time period of something like one or one and a half minutes. I would say that is probably reasonable. However, today is the first time that this new rule has been applied to the operations of the House and, of course, what I have indicated as a time frame does not necessarily make it a ruling from the Chair on the subject. An example might be that some Hon. Member might find himself the only Member involved in the exchange period and he could use up the ten-minute period entirely. I would say that if one were looking for a definition of "short and sharp", one would say that one minute or one and a half minutes would be reasonable, with, of course, the opportunity for supplementaries, additional comments, depending upon other Members who may be standing and looking for recognition.

I see the Hon. Member for Nepean-Carleton may wish to make a comment.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I would be worried about the clock watching aspect of it. I am not in the least worried about the short and sharp aspect of it, because that does fit within the framework of the discussion of the Committee. I think it would be important that the House understand that the Committee and the House, by adopting the report, did expect the Speaker in the Chair at the time to exercise quite strict discipline with respect to shortness and sharpness of both questions as well as answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I think that is clear. The time is now 2.43 and there remains, if I recall correctly, approximately five minutes. To the extent that Hon. Members are now recognized, may I remind them of the comments by

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Members themselves to the effect that exchanges should be short and sharp.

Mr. Watson: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a very brief contribution to the point of order before proceeding to my question, the contribution being that I have no quarrel whatsoever with the point being made that priority should be given to Members of the Opposition during this question period. But it seems to me that we could follow a format that is somewhat similar to what happens during the regular Question Period where Members on the backbench of the Government side do have a rare opportunity to ask questions. They are not given priority, but they do have an opportunity once in a while. As long as that is followed, it seems to me that it will work out.

My question to the Minister is based on a comment made before Christmas—and it may have been corrected by now. The Royal Commission that was established on Canada's economic future, which is headed by Mr. Macdonald, apparently, initially at least, had not invited anyone from the high technology area to join. I am wondering whether or not that oversight has been corrected, and the Minister can inform us about that. I would appreciate any information the Minister might have on the type of co-ordination that has been established for making sure that the Provinces and ourselves are working in the same direction in so far as training is concerned for industries and careers of the future.

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, on the first point I think, obviously, it would be important that someone familiar with, in fact expert in, the high technology sector be involved in some manner in that Commission. That is not my responsibility. But if there is not a member on the Commission, I am sure the technology sector will make very extensive and complete representations to the Commission, as they have done in my case and I am sure with many other Ministers.

With respect to the issue of co-ordination, on the training side and, in fact, the whole technology development side, we have now, with the advent of the new Government reorganization which is yet to be adopted by this House but which, for practical purposes, we are operating under, established a mechanism which I think will be very effective in co-ordinating the federal role in technology and research and development with provincial roles and provincial priorities. The general development agreements, I hope, will be negotiated and executed as the old agreements expire and they will perhaps form the basis for an agreement with the provinces individually and with the regions as to what directions we must move in in areas of technology. Because it is absolutely clear that we cannot in this vast country fragment our efforts; we must create as much synergism as possible.

I see I am asked to shorten my comments and I will therefore sit down.

Mr. Crombie: My question will be brief, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the comments made by Hon. Members on that