

Inquiries of the Ministry

should not necessarily be directed only to one individual.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is the point to which I object. Now facing us are seven or ten ministers out of a ministry of 28 or 29. They do not hold their power from God. They do not hold it from the Prime Minister.

An hon. Member: That's news.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They do not hold it from a Prime Minister who may have elevated himself near to that position.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They are responsible to this house, Mr. Speaker. The rules of this house which govern Your Honour, just as they govern me, provide that hon. members shall have the privilege of questioning the ministry, and not just individual members of the ministry as they take their turns in appearing here. We are quite prepared to allow for the absence of ministers in the regular course of duty. But, Mr. Speaker, I as a member of this house do protest, and claim it is a breach of my privileges as a member of this house to be faced with this contemptuous decision on the part of the ministry that they shall straggle in, a half dozen or ten of them, as they see fit.

They are the people who are responsible to this house and to the people of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): And it is not the responsibility of hon. members on this side of the house, whose attendance is far better than that of hon. members on the other side, and of the ministry in particular, to be always present.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): And if we agree, we can compare the attendance on both sides.

Some hon. Members: Ah! Ah!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I am closing—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether the hon. member does not feel that he has now stated his question of privilege?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, as long as I am not given satisfaction, I shall insist on the rights of hon. members.

Mr. Langlois: Of course.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I shall also insist on hon. members getting an answer and on the ministers assuming their responsibility before Parliament, not only by means of a television debate but by really doing their duty by us, as members who have been elected by the Canadian people.

However, I know that spring has come and that the crows are appearing again—

[*English*]

I have refrained for a good, long time from commenting on this performance on the part of the ministry with regard to hon. members of this house. I say that the insistence on this roster system and the flagrant derogation from attendance in this house by ministers is an abuse of privilege. I make this protest not only on my own behalf but on behalf of all hon. members of this house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if we might allow the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond to put his supplementary question.

Mr. MacInnis: May I put a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Mr. Speaker. With deference to your ruling, sir, I understood that it might not be possible to put the question to the minister in his personal capacity. May I indicate that no minister is more deeply involved in this retirement plan.

An hon. Member: Which one are you?—The bum or the idiot?

Mr. Trudeau: Discipline yourself.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if we could have order in the house so that we may proceed with the question of privilege. I know many hon. members are anxious to ask questions and I think the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond should be allowed to ask his supplementary, if it is in order.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, no hon. member here is more deeply involved in this particular early retirement plan than is the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. I