

several other functions. Then he went on, in the second column, to list other changes that he was making in the ministry. Those changes occurred as a result of the shifting of responsibilities because of the illness of the minister.

My third citation is from *Hansard* for October 5, 1970, page 8706, again under the heading "The Ministry, Announcement of Changes—Appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries." Here I would ask the Chair to pay particular attention to the words used by the Prime Minister on that occasion. He said:

Mr. Speaker, as is customary, I should like to inform the House of certain changes in the ministry since the House recessed on June 26, 1970.

Then he listed some rather extensive changes that he had made in the ministry during the recess. He took the first opportunity to make the explanation of those changes in the House.

I might say that in all of these citations, the previous three and this last one which I am about to quote, there was an opportunity to respond, as Beauchesne's sets forth there is, but the opportunity that was taken resulted in a very brief response by the leaders of the opposition parties of that day.

The last citation that I submit for consideration by the Chair is set forth in *Hansard* for Friday, February 18, 1972 at page 15. Again it is under the heading "The Ministry, Announcement of Changes—Tributes and Best Wishes to Member for Niagara Falls on Recovery from Illness". Here again I draw these particular words to the attention of the Chair, the words of the Prime Minister on that occasion. He said:

Mr. Speaker, as is customary, I should like to inform the House of certain changes made in the ministry since the recess began on January 12, 1972.

● (1510)

Then by far the most extensive changes in the ministry which up until that time had taken place were announced by the minister, wherein the minister of national defence, the minister of finance, the minister for manpower and immigration, the minister of energy, mines and resources, the minister of public works, the minister of state for urban affairs, and so on, were shifted.

It was customary on these four occasions at the very least—and on two of them when Parliament returned from recess—for the government, through the Prime Minister, to announce changes in its ministry. On two of those occasions where changes were extensive, as I submit that they certainly were here, the Prime Minister acknowledged the fact in the citations which I have quoted that that practice was customary; he used that very phrase.

Now we have the even more serious failure to make a statement in the House regarding the government's policy on the Crow rate. It might be regarded as a peripheral point of order, having nothing to do with the ministry. I think there is a much stronger case which I believe I have made for the Chair to consider in the case of our previous practice concerning the announcement of major changes in the ministry. But with respect to the Crow rate, we have just completed months of

Designation of Ministers

debate in the House over very important changes which were made to the Constitution. The Crow rate was an important element of that debate, since one important element was the agreement to finance the CPR as approved in the House. The CPR was a vital part of the confederation bargain. Now it would appear that elements of this bargain are being dismantled or tampered with without the slightest reference to the House. If this statement were made in the House, as it should have been, western members would be able properly to represent their constituents by asking important questions, and the public would be quickly informed both because of the activity of members and the broad publicity which television gives the House.

In my submission, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) as soon as he returns should be required to rise and make a full statement in the House, as has been customary practice in the past, so that the matter might be fully discussed, involving as it does a major change in the policy of government.

When Madam Speaker considers these matters, I would ask that you consider them separately, even though they are closely relevant to each other. In the former one, the question of changes in the ministry, in my submission past practices are rather compelling and we should return to the traditions of the House which are clearly established back to 1889, right up until 1972 where such statements were made as a matter of course. The government need not justify anything beyond explanation, and there is a good reason for it. Shortly after we returned, there was not one but several questions asked by hon. members on this side in an attempt to elicit information as to which ministry their questions should be directed as a result of over 21 changes by order in council. There was confusion simply because a full explanation was not given.

I ask for that first question to be determined. I also ask for a ruling on the obligation of the government when it departs in such a radical way from its commitment to a policy which has existed since well prior to 1900 and now goes about dismantling a major policy without some kind of announcement. It is an affront, indeed a contempt, of the House and its members when the government, through its minister, goes to Winnipeg to make such an announcement rather than giving western members here an opportunity to question the minister on a statement which, properly, should have been made on motions.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) is quite simple. Was the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) obliged to make a statement in the House following the departmental changes mentioned a few days or rather a few weeks ago? I submit that the answer is also very simple. My learned colleague has referred to precedents, the first one going back more than a century. However, I must point out that precedents apply only when there are no rules or when the rules are obscure. In this case, before referring to precedents, we should look at the Standing Orders of the