

Point of Order—Mr. Deans

Mr. Deans: No, he is a member of Cabinet as the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Notwithstanding the protestations of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans)—

Mr. Deans: I am right, and you know it.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I find it difficult—

Mr. Deans: You are wrong.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I always know that I am on the right course when the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain attempts to shout or to interject from his seat.

Mr. Deans: I am not shouting.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: In this particular instance, there has been specific indication from the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) that he indeed was fulfilling a role as Deputy Prime Minister for the Prime Minister in respect of conflict of interest questions which have nothing to do with the carrying on of a responsibility of any department or line department. In any event, I simply reiterate that the Deputy Prime Minister is precisely that.

Mr. Deans: No, no.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He assists the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in the performance of his responsibilities and duties and, accordingly, would have a very broad mandate to answer questions on behalf of the Government in that particular capacity.

Mr. Deans: In that it is a very important point—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not want this to become a debate.

Mr. Deans: It is a vitally important point. I just want to indicate—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I will interrupt you.

Mr. Deans: I urge my colleague to interject if he wishes.

There is no such person as the Deputy Prime Minister within the rules of the House of Commons. In order to hold a cabinet position, the Deputy Prime Minister had to be either the President of the Privy Council in the first place or now the Minister of National Defence in order to sit in Cabinet, since there is no cabinet position for which remuneration can be paid as designated Deputy Prime Minister. However, that individual can be designated as the spokesman for the Government and the Acting Prime Minister, as can any other cabinet Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister's role is only within the mind of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: No. We have had Deputy Prime Ministers for many moons.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is becoming difficult. Hon. Members are now rising on an entirely separate point of order arising out of a ruling on a different point of order. May I simply reserve on what we have heard so far. Does the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) have a different point of order?

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. As the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) raised his initial point of order arising out of a question which I had put, I am seeking some clarification. I understand that if the Deputy Prime Minister, or whatever title he happens to hold, is in the House, in the absence of the Prime Minister, he is entitled to field a whole range of questions on any departmental responsibility in the same way as the Prime Minister is entitled to intervene.

What I should like to know is whether the Deputy Prime Minister is entitled to do that and to take questions which relate to a particular department at a time that the Prime Minister is in the House, or is the Government obliged—

Mr. Speaker: Order please. That is exactly the question the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) just raised. The Hon. Member is simply repeating it. I have indicated that I will reserve on it, with respect.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND FEDERAL POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND HEALTH CONTRIBUTIONS ACT, 1977

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Friday, May 2, 1986, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-96, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Federal Post-Secondary Education and Health Contributions Act, 1977, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee; and the amendment of Mr. Murphy (p. 12683).

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, we must now focus on Bill C-96 which affects federal grants for post-secondary education and especially for health insurance, established programs that are financed by the provinces.

My purpose in taking part in this debate is mainly to discuss the particular problems of Quebec, starting with the \$66-million loss incurred by that province as a result of the federal Government's decision not to meet its commitment to maintaining subsidies for established programs financing at 95 per cent of what was paid during the previous year.