

*Privilege—Mr. Corbett*

to reconcile that precedent which Your Honour allowed yesterday with your ruling today.

**Madam Speaker:** If the hon. member said he was asking a question of the minister in his capacity as regional minister—I do not remember what the question was about, whether it was about fisheries or not—it is up to the minister to determine that a certain question is not within the purview of his administrative responsibility. The Speaker cannot direct a minister to answer a question. The minister is free to answer the question and to determine whether it is within the purview of his responsibility. I recall that at the end of the answer pertaining to one part of the question asked by the hon. member, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that that part of the question or that question—I am not sure which—ought to have been directed to the minister responsible for DREE, if my memory serves me correctly. So there is no precedent established there.

At any rate, the rule is quite clear to hon. members. It is the responsibility of the minister to answer or not.

The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) on this point of order?

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Yes, on this point of order, Madam Speaker. As a member from the province of British Columbia, there being no minister with responsibilities in that area whom we can question in this House, it is just possible that our ability to function is impaired. Since we cannot direct questions in this House to a minister who claims to have governmental responsibilities in the province of British Columbia, that puts us in the position of being second-class Members of Parliament. Those members who do have ministers claiming responsibility for provinces in this House can address their questions to that minister.

I feel, therefore, that there might even be a question of privilege for me in protesting that my ability to function has been impaired by the fact that there is no member on that side to whom I can speak if there are problems relating to my province.

**Madam Speaker:** It seems to me that I have been clear. There is no such thing in this House as a minister responsible for a province. I did say that if that particular responsibility had been assigned by the Prime Minister outside this House as part of the way that the Right Hon. Prime Minister wants to conduct the affairs of his government, then that is no concern of the House. The rule is clear. It has not been changed; it still stands. Members may ask questions of ministers relating to their administrative responsibility. It is very simple; it is very clear.

No question of privilege arises if a member cannot ask a question of a minister supposedly responsible for the province of British Columbia or another province. A member may ask a question relating to the administrative responsibility of a minister; that rule is clear.

The hon. member for Fundy-Royal is rising on the same point of order?

**Mr. Corbett:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I am in no way challenging your ruling. I just want to make a point.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. member may not challenge my ruling and he may not comment. I have ruled on his question and it is quite a clear question. I will not allow comment on a ruling that I have just made. I have accepted a point of order, quite a legitimate one which was brought up by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). We have discussed this and we have discussed that, and we have answered it. If the hon. member has another point of order I may entertain it, but I will not allow him to comment on my ruling.

**Mr. Corbett:** Madam Speaker, I was just in the process of saying that I was not going to comment on your ruling. My point of order is that the Prime Minister has designated certain ministers in the House, has tabled the relevant document and has given them administrative responsibility. I believe these ministers with that administrative responsibility should address themselves to the responsibilities that the Prime Minister has given them. That is purely my point of order.

**Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** With all due respect, the hon. member is still arguing his question of privilege. I see no difference between the argument offered now and some of the arguments he brought forward earlier, and I listened very patiently for nearly half an hour to his question of privilege.

The hon. member has seen fit to comment further. The comments have now been heard in the House, but I feel that he should have accepted my enjoinment not to comment.

The hon. member for Richmond-South Delta (Mr. Siddon).

**Mr. Siddon:** Madam Speaker, earlier today I asked your co-operation that I might raise this afternoon a question of privilege, one relating to a rather major federal government project to be constructed in my riding. I refer to the expansion of the Roberts Bank superport facility. I seek your co-operation in raising this question because I want—

**Madam Speaker:** I thought the hon. member was rising on a point of order. He does have a question of privilege and he has given me notice of it. I have placed them in a certain order, and that is the order in which I received them. I should like to follow that order. There is a certain sense of justice or fair play in that. If the hon. member allows me, I will now listen to the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle), whose question of privilege comes, in my ranking, ahead of his.

## MR. OBERLE—ROLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River):** Madam Speaker, I have given you notice of my question of privilege. In the course of what I have to say I hope to demonstrate to you and to the House how a new order has emerged in the House over the last few years, and in particular over the past few months, which has systematically and substantially altered the