

**Mr. Clarke:** We have a duty to perform to our constituents. Today, not one member from British Columbia was recognized. At the same time, other members from the west were recognized. For example, Your Honour recognized at least four members from Alberta, one from Saskatchewan, and at least three from Manitoba. Sir, I simply ask for your assistance to represent part of an area of Canada beyond the Rockies. I am sure my colleagues agree with me.

**Mr. Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I might mention that I had raised the question of citizenship in a motion proposed under Standing Order 43. However, today the hon. member for Fundy-Royal was recognized on a question which followed from that Standing Order 43 motion. The hon. member said that his question arose from the motion under Standing Order 43 which I had proposed. I think he raised the question partly because he knew that I had been endeavouring for some two weeks to ask that very question which arose from my motion under Standing Order 43.

I had tried to catch Your Honour's eye for two weeks when the Secretary of State was in the House, but failed to be recognized. Since British Columbia constituencies are far distant from Ottawa, British Columbia members consume much time in travelling. This, together with the business which must be done in our constituencies, makes it more difficult for us to be in attendance in this House every day. I suggest that it is more difficult for us to attend regularly than it is for members coming from almost any other part of the country. Therefore, we face special difficulties in raising questions in this House, and I endorse entirely the point of order raised by the B.C. federal Conservative caucus chairman. I realize there are separatists from central Canada and eastern Canada. We do not want to be separatists from British Columbia, but we are forced sometimes into the position of examining the role we are expected to play here.

**Mr. Basford:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. The difficulties with which Your Honour must cope in recognizing, during the question period, members on the government side and the opposition side have often been mentioned. Surely it would help your office if the Leader of the Opposition were to put four British Columbians on his front benches, as the Prime Minister of Canada has done on this side of the House.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paproski:** Now you can go home, Basford.

● (1230)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. A point of order was raised by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra to which some support was given by the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay. I am sure that if they will examine the record of the question period over the last few days they will realize that recognition of their party members today bore a very direct relation to the experience of a number of their colleagues who not only have

### *Drought Conditions*

been trying to be recognized several days in succession, but many of whom are members on the government benches who traditionally have been given some priority over backbench members.

That is not always the practice of the Chair, and I do not think it should be a continuing preference; but obviously there is considerable pressure on the Chair to recognize those members who, in addition to their own regional responsibilities, which all members have, have obviously been designated in some area of the shadow cabinet responsibility in respect of general policy. Several of those members were as anxious as members from British Columbia on my left. They will realize that, when time permits, I have always been scrupulous in attempting to balance off, each day, several regions of the country, several language groups, new and old members, different languages and different subject matters, and at the same time have attempted to recognize some desire on the part of the caucus to follow up in an organized way on a subject which is of topical interest on that day. Over the space of a week I am generally able to balance that. Regrettably, I cannot always guarantee it in one forty-minute question period.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### AGRICULTURE

#### GOVERNMENT PLAN TO MEET DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN WESTERN CANADA

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that the cabinet has approved a federal contingency plan to meet drought conditions in western Canada if the situation becomes serious. This plan is already in place and a committee of cabinet ministers, headed by the Minister of Agriculture, has been appointed to co-ordinate government action to carry out the plan.

The government realizes that a major drought can still be averted if rain comes to the right areas at the right time. The general rain of the past few days across most of the prairies has been a blessing. A few more like it during the months of May and June could eliminate some of the concerns about dry conditions. The Minister in charge of Multiculturalism (Mr. Guay) said he brought rain. I think that is a good idea. However, this government does not accept a "wait and see" approach to mean a "wait and do nothing" approach.

Some of the areas most seriously threatened by dry conditions received little or almost nothing of the rains which fell earlier in the week. We have drawn up a plan for immediate action in cases of severe effects of dry weather on the prairies, northwestern Ontario and British Columbia. We are also laying the groundwork for a long-term program if there should be an extended drought.