

Privilege—Mr. J.-P. Guay

for several days to ask a question. If a parliamentary secretary is not to be recognized in the House for the purpose of asking a question—and the people of his constituency expect him to rise in the House once in a while and ask questions—I believe, sir, that you ought to tell the House that you will not recognize us.

Mr. Speaker: Indeed, I welcome this question of privilege for that very purpose. I have, of course, to consider whether some members of the House are eligible to use the time of the question period to pose questions to the ministry. It is obvious, certainly, that members of the ministry ought not to enjoy the privilege of being able to both represent the government in answering questions in the House of Commons and, in turn, to use the time of the question period to ask questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Similarly, the privilege, of course, of being elevated to the position of parliamentary secretary falls only on those among the government ranks. This extends to those hon. members, not only the recognition, prestige and advantage that comes from their position but the obligation of answering questions, because not only do they occasionally answer questions during the question period, but they do so on a regular basis during the "late show" proceedings at 10 p.m. when they answer for the ministry. I have taken the position, to which I hold, that those who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the government ought not to use the time of the question period for the privilege of asking questions of the government.

● (1510)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, so that the parliamentary secretary will not feel isolated, may I take the liberty of asking the Acting Prime Minister to treat the parliamentary secretary with a little more respect and answer his questions privately.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, on the question raised by the parliamentary secretary, I can appreciate the reason for which you have come to this conclusion but I would point out to you—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Why don't you guys just sit down and listen for a change?

Mr. Sharp:—that parliamentary secretaries, when they are appointed to these positions, are not aware of this particular disability, and it seems to me that this question does deserve further consideration.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: That is known as parliamentary reform.

[Mr. Guay (St. Boniface).]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, certainly I do not expect you to act differently from the way you have in the question period, but I would suggest that this question might be considered when we consider the rules of the House.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, to follow the stand taken by my colleague, I wonder whether before making a definitive rule on this question you would—

An hon. Member: It is definite.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):—give members on all sides of the House an opportunity to argue this question before you. I have sat in this House for 13 years and the tradition of this House, supported by Speakers before you, sir—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question raised by the parliamentary secretary is of rather fundamental principle and of extreme importance in the conduct of the affairs of the House. I have indicated the reasons for my position, but I would very much appreciate being able to listen to the views of other hon. members who wish to express their opinions, because it is an important matter. I am certainly prepared, if the House wishes, to think about this matter further and receive representations at another time.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: However, at the moment, based on the understanding of the role and the privileges with which a parliamentary secretary is clothed, and therefore his special opportunity of access to the ministry in light of the position to which he has been appointed, I have expressed my own view and I am prepared at some other time to listen to further representations.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I hope you would hold open this question to allow some of us who have feelings about it—

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Sit down. You are impertinent.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I can see that hon. members on both sides of the House would like to make representations on this point, and I would appreciate being able to hear from them. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner).

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker—

An hon. Member: The new C. D. Howe.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No. With the greatest respect, Your Honour, I would submit that you have come to a position without understanding the panorama of the views of the House.

An hon. Member: Are you questioning the Speaker's motives?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The hon. member for Edmonton West, when he was Speaker; the Speaker before that, Honourable Roland Michener, and the Speaker who