

Government Orders

Mr. Tobin: Madam Speaker, I would absolutely concur with the words of the member who has just spoken that indeed there is, as the Speaker quite rightly points out, no formal question and answer period or informal question and answer period after a 10-minute speech. That is not at all being suggested by my colleague and friend.

I have been here for a few years, but not as long as the member for Windsor West, obviously. It is a dozen years. My colleague across the way for Mississauga South has been here for a similar period of time and perhaps a little longer. Asking a member whether that member would permit a question has fallen out of practice, but it has been quite normal. I recall a number of occasions when my friend did exactly as the member for Kingston and the Islands has suggested.

Sometimes the member will say yes and cede his place for a moment for a question. Sometimes the member has said—and this has been the practice—“I will permit questions at the end. I would like to finish my thoughts first”. It is quite normal, particularly when a member has not used his full time, as a courtesy, for a member to put exactly that request. That is all the member for Kingston and Islands has said. I submit that it is a worth while practice in this place.

I recall my friend for Mississauga South questioning, for example, some of the statistics I was quoting out of the last budget document. We had quite an interesting—for some people I might say amusing—exchange of statistics in the budget document. We both quoted them in rather interesting ways. However, that is the purpose. It is to hold members accountable so that when they speak in this place they understand and realize that they may be held accountable.

I submit that it makes for a much better debate when there is the possibility that what you say may be challenged or questioned. It would be a great shame if the Speaker's ruling is misinterpreted. I hope it is not improper or wrong or not allowed for a member to ask another member on his or her feet whether or not that member would permit a question. I hope the Speaker's ruling would not be misinterpreted that way. Parliament would be poorer.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would like to start by apologizing to the hon. member for naming the former name of his riding. Somehow the name has stuck in my mind and occasionally I will be looking for the word “Humber” and “St. Barbe—Port au Port—Baie Verte” will come back to my mind. I guess I have been sitting here for quite a while too.

• (1630)

I agree with the hon. member that if there is consent of the House we can always go outside our rules. But there must be unanimous consent. The House is its own master and I am here as a servant of the House.

If we look at the Standing Order under which we are now proceeding, after the part of debate where there are only 10-minute speeches, they are not followed by a period of questions and answers.

The only thing that I can do is ask if there is unanimous consent that the hon. member—

Mr. Milliken: He hadn't used his 10 minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Once the hon. member sits down he has completed his speech, whether he has used the 10 minutes or not. That is my understanding of the rules. I am quite prepared to be corrected, that his time expired the moment he sat down.

For questions to be asked we would need consent of the House, which was not given.

I think we should now go on with debate and I am ready to recognize anyone who will rise on debate.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, I am quite pleased to have this opportunity to speak right after the member for Manicouagan because during the course of comments by my colleague previously the member for Manicouagan responded to a statement that this was one step on the way to privatization by saying “that's right”.

I am looking back at the records of the Commons debate, *Hansard* of April 30, 1992, page 9920. I am looking at a very direct question that was put to the minister responsible for Canada Post by my colleague from Essex—Kent who said to the minister very specifically:

Earlier today the minister introduced measures to allow employees of Canada Post to buy shares in the Crown corporation.

Will the minister take this opportunity to admit to Canadians that he was embarking on the first steps of privatization of Canada Post?