

Privilege—Mr. Alkenbrack

limitation on the length of questions and long speeches by ministers serving as answers.

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, during the past number of weeks I have been trying to ask questions that were very important not only to my constituents but probably to other members and people across the country interested in these questions, and I have been unable to catch Mr. Speaker's eye. During my observations here in the House I have noticed many backbenchers become very discouraged when they have repeatedly tried to ask a question on behalf of their constituents, something that is not only very important to them but very very important to the people that elected them.

I know that your job is sometimes a very very difficult one, Mr. Speaker, but I think that probably there should be more consideration given to backbenchers in the question period, particularly to the opposition, I often think that some people must envy your position, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, because I see you get prompt attention from your mailmen and little notes that go up to the Chair. I know that all this has placed you in a very awkward position, but I would like you and other members of the House to realize also the position in which it puts the ordinary member. He has to answer to his constituents at home, not only why he was not on his feet in the House of Commons on every subject, but why he was not bringing to the members of this House the problems that are facing this country today in which they are all interested. I would like to speak at some length on this but I realize our time is precious. An hour and a half have been taken approximately on questions of privilege today, and at this time I will go no further on the matter.

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I heartily agree with the hon. gentleman because even my constituents are wondering why, on this side, members do not ask any questions. In fact a very wonderful lady not only wrote me, Mr. Speaker, but she asked me why we do not ask questions of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). She was wondering why, since we have television in the House, Liberal members do not ask questions of the other side. It is very important and it shows that the people of the country are very very interested indeed in what we are saying.

I have all the sympathy in the world for the opposition in regard to the backbenchers on that side having to take a second place in many instances to those who are asking questions because, as is obvious, Mr. Speaker, many of our members on this side do not get a chance to ask questions. We are batting an extremely good average if one or two of our members ask a question in this House in any one day. We realize, of course, that it is the role of the opposition to ask questions, but we also realize that the general public, since we have television in this House, are wondering why we on this side sit like dead ducks and are not ourselves asking some pertinent questions. It would be wonderful for us to send *Hansard* back to our constituents and to let them know the questions we have asked in this House, and also to show them

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the interest that we have in representing them here which we like to do as well as does the loyal opposition.

I want to let it be known, sir, that the rules to be brought forth, the important matters which the loyal opposition bring to your attention should also apply to us on this side of the House on an equal status.

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Guay) shared with that good lady who wrote him the news that he will be able to ask questions of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) after the next election.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, since this has been brought up by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) I, too, would like to express a certain amount of frustration with regard to the question of privilege raised by my good friend, the hon. member for Frontenac-Lennox and Addington (Mr. Alkenbrack). I think that a good deal of the problem stems from the lengthy answers that we receive from the ministers on the opposite side.

I am sure you realize the frustrations that the average backbench member of parliament experiences when seeking your recognition, and I say this with the highest amount of respect for yourself, Your Honour. But the difficulty lies in a backbench member rising to seek recognition. He can do it for the period of a week and by then the question is outdated. He also has to work in conjunction with the timetable of the minister opposite, hoping that he will be in the House.

I just wish to take this opportunity too, sir, to share with you my deep respect for the hon. members on this side of the House who took time to raise this very important issue in regard to the privileges of backbench members of parliament. It shows the legitimate concern they have for we more junior members in this House of Commons. I would like to pay tribute to the right hon. member for Prince Albert for bringing this to the fore, and to the leader of our party.

Mr. Leonard C. Jones (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very amusing interesting debate on the "ordinary member". I am beginning to wonder which member of this House is the ordinary member unless it is the Independent member of the House of Commons—the one who was elected as an independent member of the House of Commons, sir. There is no person in this House who really has been discriminated against more times and in more ways by the legislation that is presented.

I ask the government and I ask the opposition to examine the debate today on the word no. I heard a debate today on the word no. It is an amazing thing to me for the leader of that party to use the word no. I have had it said to me by members of that party so many times it is not even funny.