

● (1542)

Obviously, with respect to a matter of unparliamentary language, as I dealt with yesterday in the case of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar when he had made a remark which I found to be unparliamentary, and, incidentally with respect to the point raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West, I did not find that based on any accusation regarding the Prime Minister's conduct in respect to the House but on a general accusation, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar rose in his place and withdrew that remark forthwith.

The fact of the matter is that once the Chair has drawn disorder to the attention of the House, the disorder exists and the House cannot proceed in the face of a disorder and a finding of disorder by the Chair. Had the hon. member for Joliette done precisely the same today as the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar did yesterday, the question period would have continued. However, the Chair, it seems to me has no choice in the face of a finding of disorder, in permitting the question period, or any other proceedings for that matter, to go on, when in fact disorder has been found by the Chair. That is a discretion which the Chair has to exercise every day.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, may I now be permitted to make the central point of order that I rose to speak to, and that is, that having proceeded in this fashion, and the question of privilege having been raised prior to three o'clock and considered by the Chair prior to three o'clock, it would seem to me, and I submit this to you, sir, that what your decision means now is that you take the position that we cannot resume the question period in that the infraction of the rules by any member, whether he sits opposite or on this side, is sufficient, if we follow this route, to penalize all the members of the House. I submit that that is not a fair way to proceed at all and that we should be permitted to continue with the order of business which was interrupted at the time, and that all the members of the House should not be penalized for the infraction of the rules by any one member.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, as reported at page 5409 of *Hansard*, this was your ruling with respect to the matter involving the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. Your position was different today than it was yesterday. Yesterday as reported at this page you said this:

Order, please. I will extend the question period by a moment or two to recognize two or three hon. members who have been attempting to be recognized—

I am reading exactly what it says.

However, before I can go on, I will have to ask the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar to withdraw the remarks he has just made about the Prime Minister.

In that case, the member chose to withdraw. In this case the member chose not to withdraw. None the less, there are other members in this House who are quite outside the difference of points of view, and of the view expressed by the hon. member for Joliette, who ought not have their right to ask questions deprived on the day after you preserved their rights under a similar circumstance. That is precisely why I rose, sir. I think you should understand it.

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I rose not to defer consideration of a matter that affected the Minister of Finance. We all know the House had to deal with that matter, and it did. I rose for two reasons, first, to have you consider the step that you were about to take—you did quickly and decided to move on—but second, to preserve as well the rights of all members with respect to the question period. I cannot see, sir, and I say this with great respect, why there should be one order made on one day and another order made on the other.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make just one brief point. You have discretion as to whether you wish to continue the question period at all, but it seems that if you wanted to contribute, with the greatest respect, to a calmer atmosphere in the House, surely the right decision is to exercise your discretion and permit the five minutes that were lost to the question period so that there is not an appearance of chastising the opposition for something one individual member may have done. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to exercise your discretion in this particular instance so that the rights and prerogatives of the opposition are preserved.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a bit more involved here than discretion. I believe the rules do provide a definite duration for the question period, and while, from time to time, we permit the question period to go beyond three o'clock and the period is extended until 3.05 or 3.07, I think that if any hon. member rose on a point of order at three o'clock he would be entitled to do so, and it seems to me the discretion of the Speaker could not openly and blatantly turn aside the words of the Standing Order. I do not really believe it is entirely a question of discretion. But I am not arguing that point.

If the Speaker chose to exercise a different discretion today than he did yesterday, I would support him in that because I believe the circumstances were so different that not only the Speaker but many others would like to express their displeasure at the conduct we have witnessed today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are dealing with two issues, and I think we ought to be careful here to separate entirely the two issues. I will endeavour to do so and come to some disposition of this matter now.

The history of our practice during the question period has been a rather happy one because about a year ago we developed the practice of purging from the question period points of order and questions of privilege, and I think all hon. members would agree that has been a very beneficial experience and that the ability of the Chair to defer until the end of the fixed question period any such questions of privilege and points of order has been of great help to the conduct of the question period.