

titled to answer those questions. The article from Beauchesne which the hon. member quoted is a direction to a member who is asking a question. A question may not be asked of a minister acting in another capacity, such as being responsible for a province. So that is quite clear. The rules have not been changed.

Political responsibilities or other types of responsibilities might have been assigned outside of this House; but in this House ministers may only answer questions related to their ministerial responsibilities. That has been made quite clear. If that is the question of privilege which the hon. member has raised and which I understand is his question of privilege, he does not have one because that question has already been decided.

**Mr. Corbett:** I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I am obviously not making the point which I intended to make. I was hopeful that my reference to the publication "The Canadian House of Commons", by the well known Canadian author, John B. Stewart, in which he said that indeed it is mainly by changing old Standing Orders and by making new ones that the House changes its rules, would make my point. Surely we cannot find this House to be so inflexible that it must forever and for eternity stand behind rules which have been laid out for years now that we have a precedent being set in the House which would indicate that those rules should be changed.

Madam Speaker, I will not take up very much more time, but I believe the words of the Prime Minister did not indicate, to any substantial extent, that the ministers he appointed as regional representatives, or as ministers responsible for regional or provincial difficulties or problems, were to deal with matters entirely of a political nature. Madam Speaker, if you would refer to his words found in *Hansard* on February 25, you will see that he makes many references to the fact that "We have made sure that there was at least a voice from the province at the cabinet table". Surely there must be matters more of a substantial nature which are discussed in cabinet than simply matters which are specifically and peculiarly of a political nature. We can only assume that cabinet is working in the interests of the future of this nation.

So, Madam Speaker, I would ask you to recognize that the appendage found on page 7690 of *Hansard*, for February 25, 1981, gives validity to our argument that ministers who have been given that responsibility by the Prime Minister and are taking decisions from cabinet—surely cabinet is responsible to this House, and these are the words of the Prime Minister—must either accept those responsibilities or refuse them.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you refer to these particular issues of *Hansard*, to the words of the Prime Minister, to the edition of Beauchesne, and to Mr. Stewart's publication before you make a definitive ruling on this particular issue. I would plead with you to give the benefit of the doubt to the common members of this House of Commons who do not have the opportunity or the privilege of sitting in cabinet but must take the word of the Prime Minister, who must abide by and work within the framework of the rules of this House of Commons. This would give us an opportunity to serve the

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interests of our constituents as best we can with the full machinery which is available through the question period and other areas of procedure in this House of Commons.

I would ask you to consider my submissions and to find that I do indeed have a question of privilege, as do the rest of the members of the House of Commons who are outside cabinet, including members opposite. If you feel, after consideration of these various points that I have raised, that I have a prima facie case of privilege, then I am prepared to move that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

• (1710)

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. member has argued that I should find some validity in the fact that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has tabled a certain document in order to take it upon myself to change the Standing Orders of this House. If hon. members feel that some changes have to be made to the Standing Orders, it is up to the members to follow the procedure which would lead to amending the Standing Orders of the House. Surely the hon. member does not feel that the Speaker may on her own alter the Standing Orders of this House.

During the point of order which was previously raised in the House, members pleaded with me not to depart not only from the Standing Orders but from the usages of this House, and I agreed with that plea. I try never to depart from the rules or practices of this House in the course of conducting the debates in the House of Commons.

The hon. member therefore does not have a question of privilege. If he wants to change the rules of the House he can look up the procedures which would lead to that; but it is certainly not achieved by raising a question of privilege, and certainly not by asking the Speaker to act on her own.

**Mr. McGrath:** I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath).

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, I want respectfully to submit at the outset that I am not challenging and indeed I cannot challenge your ruling. I am just trying to reconcile the ruling which you have made with the precedent that was established yesterday. I refer to page 8734 of *Hansard*, where you allowed the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Corbett) to direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) in his capacity as minister responsible for New Brunswick and you allowed the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to respond in that capacity. Then you allowed the hon. member for Fundy-Royal a supplementary question, asking the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to respond to areas that were outside his ministerial competence, and again you allowed the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to reply.

I took that as a precedent whereby I could direct a question, for example, to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Rompkey) in his capacity as minister for Newfoundland. I am trying