

*Point of Order—Mr. Chrétien*

possible legislation respecting the War Veterans Allowance Act.

As a second question, may I ask the minister whether he has yet found a way to get Bill C-53 referred, after a short debate, to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. That bill has to do with sexual harassment.

As a third question, may I ask the minister if he is yet prepared to take the House into his confidence as to what his plans are about proroguing this session and starting a new one. It used to be when I was a lot younger that a session did not go beyond a year. This one has gone well beyond that. We are now into our 204th sitting day. In view of the fact that it might be good for the general atmosphere of the House if we had a new Speech from the Throne and a new start, I wonder if the minister could give us a response to this question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pinard:** There are three questions, Madam Speaker. To the first question the answer is: not yet. To the second question: it all depends on the progress we make on other bills. To the third question: it is still too early to answer.

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**POINT OF ORDER**

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I would like to gain some knowledge of the Standing Orders of the House. A few weeks ago members opposite spent several half-hours debating whether or not the clocks in the House were in working order. That lasted days and days. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has made a very serious accusation, yet I am discharging my responsibilities as Minister of Justice when I receive a report from the investigation director asking me to check the files to see whether or not there is a case for court action, and the Leader of the Opposition states that by acting—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. If I ask hon. members not to comment on my rulings, it is obvious that I cannot do so myself. Each time other members rose on questions of privilege, whether these had to do with clocks or something else, I did what I had to do under the circumstances and the way I handled the question raised by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) is not at all different from the way I acted with members of the opposition.

What the minister is now attempting to do, and what others do until I interrupt them, is to turn a question of privilege into a point of order, something which of course I cannot accept. Besides, the minister is in a very difficult situation because he cannot comment on that point of order without referring to the question on which I have ruled already. On several occasions the minister gave explanations to the House concerning his conduct. His explanations were accepted by the House until

further notice. Should another opportunity arise, I am confident that when other questions are put to the minister he will give to the House whatever explanations he may want to give, but he may not do so at this time.

**Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council):** Madam Speaker, often in the past when the Chair ruled against a question of privilege based on the criteria established in practice and in the Standing Orders, a member could still rise on a point of order. So it is in this manner that I rise now on a point of order, which is not the question of privilege raised by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) which you rejected, because points of order can be raised by any member of this House. Now it is strictly forbidden, according to the rules, to make allegations about a member, and it is clear that during question period the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) accused the Minister of Justice and made allegations by saying that he was not doing his job and was not taking his responsibilities seriously. That is clearly against the rules of this House. I am not raising a question of privilege, as you have already given your ruling on that, but I am rising, as an ordinary member, on a point of order to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw his very serious allegations about the Minister of Justice, if he has the courage to do so.

Madam Speaker, we are dealing with procedure, and it is indeed true that you have ruled against the question of privilege, perhaps before completely hearing out the Minister of Justice, but that was your ruling and I do not wish to go back on it. I will abide by your ruling and not comment on it. However, by rising on a point of order, I submit that it is the Chair's duty to ensure that no member of this House, whatever his title, be allowed to make allegations about anyone. In this case, the Leader of the Opposition is clearly at fault for having, during the Question Period, taken the opportunity to clearly, directly and unequivocally suggest that the Minister of Justice was not doing his job. I think that we cannot let that go by unchallenged and that is why I am rising on a point of order because I would like you to ask the Leader of the Opposition to have the courage to stand in his place and withdraw his accusations.

● (1520)

[English]

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, if there is any duty at all on a member, his first duty is not to attempt to do indirectly what would be wrong to do directly, and that is to question a ruling of the Chair. I must say I am rather surprised at my hon. friend moving in the direction he did, having regard to the skill and understanding he has of the rules.

The second thing is, it is incumbent upon every member of the House to address the House and the issues in a parliamentary way. If you examine the blues of the exchanges that took place you will find that the language used by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) in the House was