

*Question Period Procedure*

answered on the basis that his question appeared to you to be argumentative. My point is this: I would have thought it would have been possible within the rules now followed that, before the decision was made, Your Honour would have wished to have heard some representations as to the adequacy or otherwise of the member's question. It will be interesting to see the transcript.

I think there is a distinction to be made between an argumentative question and one which contains adjectives. For example, as I understood it, the hon. member referred to a vessel as a piece of junk. I do not believe that is necessarily argumentative—it may be a statement of fact. Members in the House, during the course of presenting strongly held views, may use that kind of language and it should not necessarily be considered argumentative unless it goes beyond the line of being an information-seeking question.

Another point I wish to raise with respect to the question period is that I think we should be entitled to be heard on points of order until other rules are adopted. At the present time I understand we have the right to bring up points of order and to be heard prior to a decision being made with respect to a point of order.

A further point which occurred to me during the course of the question period concerned the operation of the microphones in the House. They are switched from the person asking the question to the government side or member of cabinet who is to reply, without any direction from Your Honour. What occurs to me most vividly is the occasion on which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) was engaged in questioning the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) and Your Honour stood, which I understand is a signal to have the microphone switched off. Indeed, what happened was that the microphone was then switched over to the government side, to the minister under question, without any direction from Your Honour or any recognition of the minister by the Chair.

I understand that when Your Honour stands up to intervene in a question there is some point you wish to make, either to rule the question out of order or for some other purpose. I have noted on occasion that the switching takes place automatically, to the point at which the cabinet minister being questioned apparently has the right, by virtue of this automatic process, of answering before the balance of the question can be put.

I bring these matters to Your Honour's attention because I believe them to be important if we are to conduct the question period in an orderly manner. You can understand, Sir, that we on the opposition side wish to co-operate as much as possible, but unless the rules are quite clear then there will of course be a sense of grievance. It is my feeling that Your Honour should recognize a person on a point of order when it arises as a result of procedures in the question period, and I would appreciate Your Honour looking into the question of the mechanical operation of the microphones without direction from yourself.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member in asking me to hear representations of the sort he has just made is asking me to offend the regulations under which we now proceed. The

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

precise terms of the procedures which we now follow are that I am not to hear points of order raised by way of objection on the part of members who are not recognized—that is the way it was before—I am not to hear those points of order until after the question period is over. That is precisely what I am doing now. I follow this procedure every day. If there are members who have grievances to raise which formerly they might have raised during the question period—I hear them at this stage, just as I have done today.

For me to entertain applications on matters of privilege or order during the question period when a member feels in some way aggrieved by a decision of the Chair would, in my opinion, be running counter to the order under which we are operating. Therefore I would invite the hon. member, if he wishes to do so, to persuade the House to return to the old procedure, one which I feel would be a retrograde step. However, it is the hon. member's right to decide that. For me to recognize the hon. member today, in his capacity as acting House leader, or to recognize the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), or any other member who wanted to raise a grievance about not being recognized for a third supplementary, or things of that nature, during the question period, and stop the question period at three o'clock, would be a method of proceeding which would create great difficulty. Instead, the House has directed that such matters should be left until the end of the question period. I believe it to be a preferable course, and one I am bound to follow.

If the hon. member wishes to examine the language of the hon. member for Capilano on his supplementary question today to try to persuade me that he indicated that a purchase was made in a manner it was made, which may be a proper allegation, but that it was nothing but a piece of junk—that was the language he used, I believe—if that is an information-seeking question and not an argumentative one in the terms I understand it, I would have a great deal of difficulty knowing what is an argumentative question. If I can be changed in that opinion, fine. The supplementary question attempted by the hon. member for Capilano was, in my opinion, very clearly argumentative in its terms, and I therefore went on to another question.

Another difficulty we faced today, for example, was posed when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) put a question and was interested in pursuing a supplementary. His question was answered in the affirmative in every respect. It seems to me that the Chair, by attempting to control supplementaries in the interest of getting a broader participation in the question period, can scarcely permit a supplementary question to one which has been met with a full, affirmative answer. The right hon. member asked for something to be considered, and the leader of the government stood up to answer the question which he said contained a worthwhile suggestion, and promised active consideration. If I am to grant a supplementary in a situation like that, to follow up some further attack, I cannot imagine what the attack would be.