

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This question transgresses the ruling.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): On the point of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: I would like to refer hon. members to May's seventeenth edition, page 350:

Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected—

This, of course, is only one of many citations, and I suggest to the hon. member that the question he is asking at this time is out of order.

Mr. Lambert: On the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. MacEwan: Then on a supplementary question may I ask the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys if the Minister of National Health and Welfare will accompany him to the conference next week.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys): Mr. Speaker, I will have this tremendous honour.

Mr. Lambert: On the point of privilege that was raised, Mr. Speaker, it may be observed as well that if ministers are not to acknowledge responsibility for matters outside their ministries, then they should not make announcements with regard to their provinces.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert: And may I also say, Mr. Speaker, that so far as I can remember under my predecessor, and during my own tenure of the honourable office you hold—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lambert: A lot of the juniors may not remember.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lambert:—it was a recognized principle that ministers could make announcements with regard to their particular regions, and they were questioned in this regard. The late hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings was regularly questioned in this manner by hon. members of the present ministry who were then in opposition, and this was quite readily accepted.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if I may speak to this point, in view of the ruling you have

[Mr. MacEwan.]

made I would point out this fact; that an announcement having to do only with the Department of Transport was put out in a press release under the title of the Department of Transport, and it stated that the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the Minister of Transport made the announcement. Certainly, sir, although the rule ordinarily applies, if ministers are going to play that game then they have to answer in the house.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. member for Kootenay West is addressing the Chair on the same question of privilege.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Yes, Your Honour. On a point of order, as a member who has been in the house for a considerable number of years I want to support, somewhat reluctantly, the Leader of the Opposition. In British Columbia ministers holding certain portfolios have made announcements on questions that related to other ministers' responsibilities. This has been a practice throughout the years here, and I do think the hon. member was quite correct in asking this question of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, may I just make a point on the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Cape Breton South on the same point of order.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Further on the question of privilege, I have referred to precedents here, and I will once again quote the minister's own words when he referred to the fact that this was a practice followed by the late Hon. George Nowlan, and by the present Minister of Trade and Commerce.

He himself referred to this as a practice. He himself was not called out of order at the time, and the Leader of the Opposition has already referred to the fact that the Minister of National Health and Welfare, in the Cape Breton and Nova Scotia area, has been putting out press releases concerning departments other than his own.

I would call again on a precedent established here when the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys was absent from the house