

Adjournment Motion

for York Centre to clarify his position. The hon. member for York Centre stated, as reported at page 7426 of *Hansard* for February 18, 1981:

—because the ridings for which the Prime Minister asked me to assume this responsibility do not only include ridings held by members of the opposition, but as well a number of ridings which are represented by Liberal members.

I believe this statement by the hon. member for York Centre began the precedents which are being set in this House of Commons which indicate that ministers were given the responsibility by the Prime Minister to answer directly questions put to them by members of the opposition, which would be, if not acceptable, contrary to Citation 361 of *Beauchesne* which reads:

A question may not be asked of a minister in another capacity—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe the hon. member is on a point of order and not a question of privilege. He is referring to matters of order and not to privilege at all. I will allow him to pursue this matter briefly, but I ask him to relate his arguments to the question of privilege and not to a point of order.

Before five o'clock, I must read the following:

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: Order, please! It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay)—McDonald royal commission—Inquiry respecting operation directed at Chinese embassy in Ottawa; the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman)—External aid—Concept of tripartite aid; the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong)—Canadian Armed Forces—Testing of chemical defoliants—Monitoring of effects.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. CORBETT—DESIGNATION OF MR. LEBLANC AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

The House resumed consideration of the question of privilege of Mr. Corbett.

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, I appreciate your direction. I can assure you from the knowledge I have of the matter that it is extremely important, from my point of view, that Madam Speaker have the advantage of all material and all issues which have been raised in this House

pertaining to the responsibility that the Prime Minister has conferred upon members of the cabinet who, after all, must answer in this House of Commons. I feel quite strongly about this and, indeed, I hope Madam Speaker will agree that what I have said is the case.

● (1700)

I would like to refer you, Madam Speaker, to this very point, which was substantiated by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) as reported in *Hansard* on February 19, 1981, when, in response to a question by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood, he again stated:

What I would like to tell the hon. member is that ministers for various regions of the country have special responsibilities within the cabinet for representing the interests of those regions.

He goes on to state:

For example, for almost 17 years now I have had a special responsibility within the cabinet for representing the interests of my region, namely, the province of Nova Scotia.

Madam Speaker, I want you to realize that I am not questioning the responsibilities which the Prime Minister has given these ministers. In that regard, I do not believe that I am more apt to have a point of order than a point of privilege. I am simply pointing out that this is, in fact, a responsibility which these ministers have accepted as members of cabinet and as ministers of the Crown.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance went on to say, again from the same page of *Hansard*:

—but I think it is essential, in our system of government, that ministers be given responsibilities for representing in a special way the interests of their regions in the cabinet and around the cabinet table.

I believe that the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, in his recognition of the special areas of responsibility, are significant enough to contravene the particular section of *Beauchesne* to which I have referred. However, following that the Prime Minister of the country was drawn into the question. On February 25, 1981, at page 7673 of *Hansard*, he stated:

Madam Speaker, I want to enter into this debate on the question of privilege because I must confess or admit that I have been responsible for the setting up of this system of traditional regional representations in so far as my party is concerned.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has now been speaking for over 15 minutes, and I cannot see that he will be able to tell me more in the rest of his time than he has already. I already understand what that question of privilege is—and it is really not a question of privilege. I do have to ask the hon. member to conclude. The hon. member is discussing a matter on which I have ruled. Ministers have been given regional responsibilities by the Right Hon. the Prime Minister which are of a political nature. I have ruled that as far as this House is concerned, the mere fact that the Prime Minister has tabled a list of regional responsibilities for ministers does not change the rules of this House. Ministers still answer questions related to their administrative responsibilities. They are en-