

*Business of the House*

always brief, no debate being permitted, and the replies are as concise as possible. The minister interrogated may reply at once or may direct that the usual notice be given. Such questions are governed by the same rules of order as questions of which notice has been given.

In other words, if a question could not be inserted on the order paper, a member cannot ask it before the orders of the day are called.

Then citation 303 reads:

Questions addressed to ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in parliament, or to any matter of administration for which the minister is responsible. Within these lines an explanation can be sought regarding the intentions of the government, but not an expression of opinion upon matters of policy.

It is not in order to ask merely whether certain statements made in a newspaper, are true; but attention may be drawn to such statements, if the member, who puts the question, makes himself responsible for their accuracy.

In so far as those last two lines are concerned—"if the member, who puts the question, makes himself responsible for their accuracy"—I confess I do not know what that means. If a member makes himself responsible and it happens the statement is not accurate, what can happen? In my view, that part is meaningless.

Then citation 307 reads:

A minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason for his refusal, and insistence on an answer is out of order, no debate being allowed. A refusal to answer cannot be raised as a question of privilege, nor is it regular to comment upon such refusal. A member can put a question, but has no right to insist upon an answer.

An answer to a question cannot be insisted upon, if the answer be refused by the minister on the ground of the public interest; nor can the question be replaced on the notice paper. The refusal of a minister to answer on this ground cannot be raised as a matter of privilege.

Now, I said that these were the basic rules. I have dug into the various statements and discussions that have taken place, on points of order regarding these rules, which appear in *Hansard*, and I should like to refer hon. members to them. I will not read these excerpts but I should like hon. members to read the discussion between the Hon. Mr. King and the Hon. Mr. Bennett in 1937, which appears in *Hansard*, of February 1, pages 422-424; another intervention on January 29, pages 258-259 of volume 1, 1939; another one in 1940, volume 2, July 12, pages 1569-1571; volume 2, July 15, 1940, pages 1596-1597; *Journals*, July 15, 1940, pages 216-218; another one on March 12, 1942, page 1243; volume 2, March 19, 1942, page 1441; a statement by Mr. Speaker Glen which appears in *Journals* of March 15, 1943, pages 160-161; another statement in the same year, *Hansard* for May 28, volume 4, page 3126; then again on June 10 of the same year, pages 3494-3496; then

on January 16, 1944, pages 547-549; another on July 25, 1946, pages 3831-3834; again in 1947, February 24, pages 701-702; volume 1, March 5, 1930, page 293; a statement by Mr. Speaker Macdonald on May 29, 1951, page 427 of *Journals*. I will simply quote this last one.

There is another matter to which I think reference should be made at this time. It is with respect to the procedure regarding the asking of questions. I would refer hon. members to standing order No. 44 which is now our standing order 39. This standing order provides for the placing of questions on the order paper, which is the usual procedure, and should be followed whenever possible.

It has nevertheless been the practice in our house to allow a certain number of oral questions and it is not my purpose to discourage members from asking questions of the proper type as I feel that these questions create a more lively interest in the business of the house.

These oral questions are asked when the orders of the day are called and are frequently asked without notice. I would, however, emphasize that these oral questions should be asked only in connection with very urgent and important matters of public concern and only if it would not be in the public interest to place them on the order paper and receive answers in accordance with the method provided for in the standing orders. They should always be brief. No debate is permitted and the replies should be as concise as possible. The questions should not be prefaced by the reading of letters, telegrams, newspaper extracts or preambles of any kind.

He concluded by asking for the co-operation of hon. members in the observance of these rules. Now, if I were to tell hon. members that not long ago supplementary questions were considered to be prohibited, many hon. members would ask me, "What is the basis for saying that?" Mind you, during the war, in 1943, in a time of emergency and when questions were considered to be of great importance, Mr. Speaker Glen, in discussing a question—which incidentally had been asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), so he will remember it—said:

That is hardly a question that can be asked on the orders of the day and certainly it should not be put. I must point out further that a practice is coming into vogue in the house of putting supplementary questions to elicit answers in addition to those given by ministers. If the rules permitted it, that would be entirely proper; but the rules do not permit of supplementary questions being asked. I have allowed a number of these questions where explanations or statements by ministers might reasonably be requested, in circumstances where the minister would no doubt wish to have his remarks made as clear as possible. But I must point out that the rule is as I have stated.

This was in 1943. I would say about half of the membership of this house was in that parliament of 1943. My arithmetic may not be very good but there is a substantial number of hon. members here today who were in the parliament of 1943. I hope that hon. members will read carefully all the