

Brunswick. I wish to state my question of privilege at the outset so that Your Honour will have knowledge of what I wish to bring to your attention and of the manner in which I feel my privileges as a member of the House have been brought into question.

The Prime Minister stated in the House that members of cabinet have responsibilities pertaining to certain regions of the country and, in some cases, each province. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) was named by the Prime Minister as being the minister responsible for New Brunswick. The same minister said that he does not think he has those responsibilities for the province. I feel my privileges as a member of the House of Commons are being infringed upon if I cannot rely upon the word of the Prime Minister in matters which are obviously critical, or if the minister in question is not prepared to accept the responsibilities conferred upon him by the Prime Minister without prior reference to the House, which he has had ample time to do.

Later in my remarks on this question of privilege, I should like to refer Madam Speaker to Beauchesne's Citation 361 on page 133, which I feel certain you will bring into question. I draw your attention to the fact that I am cognizant of the particular citation, but before getting to that I should like to refer to a publication entitled "The Canadian House of Commons" which was written by Mr. John B. Stewart, a well-known and recognized Canadian who is well-versed in matters of procedure in the House of Commons.

To substantiate Mr. Stewart's qualifications, I should like to indicate that he was elected to the House of Commons in 1962 as a Liberal. He gained a great deal of knowledge as parliamentary secretary to the Hon. G. J. McIlraith. Also he was vice-chairman of the special committee on procedure and organization. I feel this is quite pertinent to the points I should like to make in my question of privilege. Also Mr. Stewart served for a year as legislative adviser to the Hon. D. S. Macdonald, who was the government House leader between 1968 and 1969, during which time a number of procedural reforms were made.

In his publication, Mr. Stewart indicated many things concerning the role of the House of Commons, but one item to which I should like to draw Your Honour's attention is in the second paragraph of page X of the "Preface" of that particular publication. Mr. Stewart states:

However, the House, like the provincial legislatures before it, has found it desirable to make certain "Standing Orders".

The following is the critical part:

Indeed, it is mainly by changing old Standing Orders and by making new ones that the House changes its rules.

I feel those quotations are particularly pertinent to the question of privilege I am attempting to make.

On page 56 of his publication, Mr. Stewart writes:

The basic requirement for an oral question is that it be sufficiently urgent and important to warrant the use of the time of the House. When the Speaker thinks that a question does not meet those qualifications—urgency and importance—he may refuse to allow the minister to answer.

Privilege—Mr. Corbett

In view of the words of Mr. Stewart, Madam Speaker, I can only assume that you consider the question that I put to the minister designated by the Prime Minister to be responsible for the province of New Brunswick to be of sufficient importance to take up the time of the House. Indeed, because of your non-interference, or at least because of the fact that you did not rule the question out of order, I trust that the question was in order as it was put.

● (1650)

To refresh Your Honour's memory as to how the question was put, I stated:

Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister who is responsible for New Brunswick, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

I want to make it perfectly clear that in no way am I questioning or arguing with the response I received from the minister; that is not the thrust of my question of privilege. There is no argument with the response I received from the minister who is responsible for the province of New Brunswick. I accepted totally the response that he gave me.

I feel I should now refer to the point I alluded to earlier, which is contained in Beauchesne's fifth edition on page 133, Citation 361, which states:

A question may not be asked of a Minister in another capacity, such as being responsible for a province, or part of a province, or as spokesman for a racial or religious group.

That was based on a ruling by the Speaker of the House of Commons on October 16, 1968 and is referred to in the House of Commons *Journals* on pages 132 to 134. The ruling was made as a result of a question which was raised by the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall), which dealt with the attendance in the House of ministers of the Crown during Question Period. The ruling of the Speaker at that time is quite lengthy and I do not want to take up the time of the House by reading the entire decision. To that end, I will not read the entire decision unless it is the desire of Madam Speaker or members opposite that I should do so.

On page 133 of Mr. Speaker's decision, in the third paragraph, he refers to page 3756 of *Hansard* for June 1, 1966, the page to which the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond had alluded. Apparently, the hon. member had filed a question seeking information from the then minister of national health and welfare, presumably in his capacity as minister responsible for Nova Scotia. Page 133 of *Journals* for October 16, 1968, reads in part as follows:

A ruling was then made to the effect that a question must be addressed to a minister in relation to his administrative responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, I would like you to take under consideration the fact that I believe there has been a precedent set in the House during the past few weeks, particularly during the month of February. In that month a question of privilege was raised by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae), who took exception to the fact that the hon. member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) was taking over responsibilities which were, in the opinion of the member for Broadview-Greenwood, his own. At that point he asked the hon. member