

Privilege

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, on the same point with regard to the conduct of Question Period, there were a total of 17 members who asked questions today; 14 from the opposition parties and 3 from the government party. In your deliberations I would ask that there be a fairer distribution of questions during Question Period. The governing party has a majority of seats in this House yet we were relegated to three questions during question period.

I would also ask that you consider the use of lists during Question Period. I understand that it is the first question period of the session, but you were referring to lists provided to you by the government and by the opposition parties. I would submit that in effect restricts, limits and fetters your ultimate authority to recognize members in this House. I would ask that in your deliberations you consider the question of the provision of lists in order to establish those who are entitled and able to ask questions during question period.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I would point out that I made a statement prior to question period today explaining the decision why we were going to go a little bit over. Of course, I take these comments under advisement. Negotiations will be ongoing for the next little while.

On the same point of order. The hon. member for Kamloops.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I have to reply to my hon. friend who has just spoken. I think it is well recognized in the parliamentary system that question period provides the opportunity for those in opposition to ask questions of the government. My hon. friend has many opportunities in caucus meetings and in other areas to raise questions of importance on behalf of his constituents. This is really the only opportunity that we have as opposition members.

If my hon. friend looks at the record of today he will find that for the first time that I can recall the government had far more statements than it would normally receive.

Mr. Speaker, recognize when you make your deliberations that this is the only opportunity we have on a daily basis to ask questions of the members opposite.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker I rise on a point of order.

I would request that you not permit grandstanding on supposed points of order. When the member for Sherbrooke was actually speaking to the throne speech he was totally out of order.

We would suggest that the House management committee which deals with standing orders look at these matters and respond to the House in the appropriate fashion.

The Speaker: Again, I will take your comments under advisement and I thank you for giving me as much room as you have thus far.

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Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the point I raised is an issue that is ultimately to be decided by the Speaker and not by any other House or management committee. That is my understanding of the rules and the practices in this place. I am happy to co-operate with all members in this House in assisting you in making that decision.

My point of privilege is the following. I am sorry to have to raise it on this the very first day of question period. However, I could not help but notice that as we started question period you gave the House a temporary ruling on how this place would work for question period and for the statements we make before question period. I do not want to quarrel with the content of your ruling, maybe not at this point, but I want to question the process that led to this ruling.

● (1520)

Let me point out that your ruling directly affects my rights and privileges and those of 12 other people in this place. I understand that neither I nor any of the other 12 members referred to in the ruling were consulted. This is my understanding unless someone else has spoken with you.

It is my understanding that you informed us as you gave us the ruling that you had spoken with the whips of the other official parties who represented a point of view.

The point I want to raise with you and the reason I feel it is critically important that we raise it at this time is that if you are going to make rulings as you are called upon to do every day concerning the rights and privileges of members of Parliament and how this place works, then it seems only fair on the principle of natural justice that all members in this place have an opportunity to be heard before such rulings are made.

The Speaker: I will take your comments under advisement. It would be the intention of the Chair to consult as widely as possible before taking any decisions. I will take the hon. member's comments under advisement.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

During the last Parliament, I recall a somewhat similar experience and I heard arguments from the government party. The Speaker told us at the time to consult with party officials and subsequently to notify the independent members who were not necessarily taking part in the negotiations. We know something about this. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that a ruling was