

Privilege—Mr. Wenman

Mr. Flis: Madam Speaker, I would not have raised the question of privilege if precedent was not set in this House. But—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. member is commenting on a ruling which I have just made. I am sure that he accepts the terms of the ruling. I know he is not happy with it. I know he would have liked to mention the national day of The Philippines, but I simply cannot accept that.

MR. WENMAN—DEFINITION OF SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Mr. Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege is both a question of privilege and a point of order. I find my ability to—

Madam Speaker: Order. It cannot be both. The hon. member will have to make up his mind.

Mr. Wenman: I am bringing it forward specifically as a question of privilege, and there are other elements which Your Honour may want to consider in another format later.

At any rate, I find that my capacity as a member of Parliament has been inhibited due to Your Honour's interpretations of the rules and procedures of this House. I refer specifically to supplementary questions. I feel my privilege has been disrupted. On several days I had questions prepared which fitted in with other supplementary questions that had been asked. Under a previous Speaker in a previous House, my privilege was further extended. First, there was a direct definition of what is a supplementary question. I would ask that that definition be restated by the Speaker as it relates to second supplementary questions of members and also supplementary questions to questions asked initially by other members. Fewer questions are being asked in the House because those who are recognized automatically ask two questions each. As well, when a supplementary question is called, the second supplementary is not being recognized. This has happened on three or four occasions.

● (1220)

Could Your Honour tell me what the procedure is as it relates to the previous House and also advise me of your interpretation?

Madam Speaker: First of all, the hon. member does not have a question of privilege. Through a question of privilege, hon. members cannot raise the fact that they have not been recognized in the House. I think I have described the policy and the interpretation which the Speaker makes in the conduct of question period.

The hon. member invites me to define what is a supplementary question. I am not sure he would gain if I were to be so brave as to attempt to define a supplementary question. I think the spirit of it is that the question ought to be supplementary, that is to say, a follow up on whatever answer a minister has given in the House. If I were to follow that procedure very rigidly, I think I would have to rule out many supplementary

questions. Sometimes a new question is asked dealing with new subjects.

I think we are governed by custom. When the rules are not too precise, the custom has been that when a member is recognized he is usually granted a question and what we call a supplementary. In other words, a member has two questions. He has a chance to follow up on whatever has been given as an answer in the House.

The hon. member is complaining that he has not been recognized sufficiently often.

Mr. Wenman: No, Madam Speaker, I am not.

Madam Speaker: I am delighted to hear that. That is very rare!

I just want to tell hon. members that in an attempt to be as fair as I possibly can, I do have a cumulative list. It used to be for a few days back; now I keep a cumulative list of members who rise in the House during question period. As days go on, their names are struck off when I recognize them.

Today I had quite a number of members who happened to be on the cumulative list but were not in the House. I will try to put them on the list for another day. Members know that I do extend the question period slightly on Fridays to give people a chance to be involved in the question period. I would counsel hon. members to be in the House on Fridays if they are really eager to take part in question period.

That is the policy and that is the interpretation. I do not think I have departed from what my predecessors did. I am, however, having a great deal of trouble with the length of questions. I used to have as many as ten Conservative members asking questions during the question period. I am now down to recognizing seven or eight members. I say I am down; I should say the Conservatives are down. I say "I" because I am concerned that they all be included. This cannot be done every day. I have noticed in the last two or three weeks that I am down to recognizing seven or eight members. I regret that, but I have a time restriction and I have to permit members of the New Democratic Party to ask questions. They cannot be down to two questions a day. That would be impossible, taking into account the proportion of New Democratic Party members in this House. If members asked shorter questions, I do not think they would lose much and other members would then gain additional opportunities to be recognized during the question period.

MR. MCKINNON—MOVE OF RCMP HEADQUARTERS "E" DIVISION

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, once again I am in the position where a member with a question of privilege is expected to apprise the Speaker of it at the earliest possible moment and at the same time prepare the case to support his contention that he has a question of privilege. The time constraints in that regard are very difficult indeed.

My question of privilege today has to do with a House order that was passed requiring the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan)