

that—we would have questions asked perhaps every day of ministers of the Crown, say, of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. McIlraith) in his capacity as minister for eastern Ontario—

**Mr. Knowles:** For Ottawa.

**Mr. Speaker:**—and that he would answer a question on agriculture in his capacity as minister of agriculture for eastern Ontario; and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) might be asked a question on external affairs in his capacity as minister from British Columbia. If that were done it seems to me we would be reaching a situation which would make it impossible to determine with any kind of logic, how questions would be put, whom they would be addressed to, and who would be responsible for answering.

When there is any doubt about who is responsible, I suggest to hon. members that questions in such instances should be directed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), who has a general responsibility. This is what I said at the outset of my remarks, that if there is any statement of policy made outside the house by a cabinet minister, an hon. member who is dissatisfied with the statement and wants to seek additional information, should direct his query to the Prime Minister.

I regret very much that in so far as the particular questions to which the hon. member refers are concerned, I cannot really accept the contention that he has placed before me in his question of privilege, and I assure him that any particular question he places to the Chair, or that he wishes to put through the Chair, will be looked at individually. I can assure him I shall study them as objectively as I can without prejudice of objectivity as I can without prejudice of any type or any nature.

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition):** On a point of order, if I might, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a misapprehension here about the nature of these questions and the interpretation that you are placing on them. If ministers can go abroad and make promises and give undertakings, they do so under the principle that the cabinet is responsible for the statements made. Surely there is no way in which a minister can be held responsible for making effusive utterances for political purposes, and promises that are not intended to be carried into effect, unless questions are asked later,

else they are given an aura of responsibility to which they are not entitled.

I suggest, sir, you review this matter because otherwise a minister can make any statement, any promise, so long as he is not making it for his own department, and then be above questioning in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am in agreement with the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker). I do not want to take a hard and fast position on this. I realize that in some instances some of these questions can be borderline, and I feel whenever there is any doubt an hon. member should be given the benefit of the doubt and allowed to ask these questions. In all such instances members should be given the benefit of the doubt and be allowed to ask their questions. I am quite prepared to review the general situation, and in particular the questions to which the hon. member for Cape Breton South has referred. But I would like to restate my position so far as the general principle is concerned, and I shall review the situation over the week end.

**Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South):** I have one further word, Mr. Speaker, in connection with your remarks in respect to the questions I placed before the Clerk of the House this afternoon. The remarks you have made quite possibly could apply to the first question if we were to follow the rulings that had been given. However, I would call your attention to the fact that the second question was directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and/or the Minister of Fisheries, and under no circumstances could this particular question be ruled out, unless there was something particularly wrong with the wording.

**Mr. Speaker:** This is where virtue may come in allowing one and refusing the other; but I shall certainly look into the matter and I appreciate the hon. member's concern about the situation. I can assure him I shall give his representations, and those which have been made by the Leader of the Opposition, every possible consideration.

**Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back for a moment and review precedents in the house—

• (5:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I can assure the hon. member that, with the assistance of