

over the word of the Justice who made the original allegation.

**An hon. Member:** Right on.

**Mr. Broadbent:** That is an extremely important point. Surely, as a minister of the Crown in a political party whose integrity in this case has been questioned by a particular judge, he has a responsibility to explain to this House how he reached the conclusion that all he had to do now was refer the matter to the Chief Justice of Quebec. I think this is extremely important.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Broadbent:** Second, I think it is important that the Minister of National Health and Welfare—and I understand Your Honour's previous ruling on this matter; he was not a minister at the time he took the course of action that the judge said he took—as a minister of the Crown now would have a right under the rules of this House to get up and make a statement clearing up for the record the role he played and under whose instructions he acted; if he did not issue instructions to the judge in question, what he did; what was the nature of his position; if he acted under the request of a foreign government and acted on that request to interfere with the judicial process in this country. It seems to me he should have an explanation to present to the House to justify that course of action as well.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Broadbent:** Finally, then, I think ministers should get to their feet and make a statement to the House that would provide a clear explanation of the conduct of those charged.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, before you move on, I simply rise to say I was quite serious in my point of order that statements of ministers have been made and at this point, whether they are prepared to make further comments or not, the rules should apply and opposition members should have a chance to reply to those statements.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre raised the original point of order concerned with the answers given by ministers during the question period today. I am sure he knows full well, as do other hon. members, that there may be comments on the length or nature of replies given by ministers during the question period. That, surely, cannot be translated into surrounding them with a nature that makes them into a statement by a minister during that period of time. If such an attempt were made by a minister during the question period, I am sure the objection would be loud and long and what constituted a statement would have to be deferred to an appropriate time during orders of the day and would not be permitted during the question period.

Certainly no such objection was forthcoming during the question period. I cannot now place upon those answers

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that kind of character, any more than I could on other occasions make those kinds of rulings during the question period to change the character of an answer or in fact of many of the questions that are put.

The other point of order is one urging that ministers come forward and make statements on this subject. That point has been well made, but there is no ruling that can be made by the Chair in respect of this kind of representation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) on a point of order.

**Mr. Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I fully support the point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I am one of the members involved. I put my first question as well as my supplementary directly to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and, as the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) already mentioned, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) thought it proper to answer with material he had on hand, just as if he was making a declaration under the Standing Orders of the House. I was allowed to speak on two occasions only, and after the President of the Treasury Board made his declaration, which I do not contest, I was no longer entitled to put a supplementary concerning an answer given by the minister, when I did not even ask for it. Mr. Speaker, I feel that our rights are violated on this matter, that both the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) were absolutely right. The ministers try to evade the issue by making statements when and where they wish, thus preventing the opposition from shedding light on such questionable issues as those we are discussing today. Either we are allowed to ask questions, or we are not.

● (1510)

[English]

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that it is not an answer period; it is a question period.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I think I have the right to point out that early in the question period several members tried to raise points of order. I got up myself. Your Honour said you could not entertain points of order until three o'clock. Then, when I raised my point of order at three o'clock, you said it should have been raised previously, which is what I had tried to do.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. We should be fundamentally clear on what has taken place. Extensive, lengthy questions were put to ministers from the beginning to end of the question period. In every case, questioners were permitted latitude to ask lengthy, detailed questions. Similarly, latitude was allowed to ministers in making their responses to lengthy questions. If I were now to make the interpretation that such lengthy replies ought to have been made by way of statements on motions, that might constitute a criticism of the ministers. To go one step further and say that they in fact constitute a statement on motions