

*Point of Order*

• (1130)

I am not certain it was the intention of the House in adopting the changes which created comment and question periods that ministers of the Crown, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition would be protected from any rebuttal in the House. Certainly the first comments of a Speaker on these changes made no such clarification or qualification.

The Speaker of the day, Madam Speaker Sauve, said on January 17, 1983, as the rules were adopted on a one-year experimental basis only:

The first—is a fundamental one which will directly affect the debating practices of the House. The introduction of a 10-minute period during which questions may be asked and comments made concerning the speech of the hon. member who has just spoken is likely to bring about a radical change in the way in which our debates are conducted. The 10-minute periods will be available to members during most key debates, including those on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the budget, allotted days and the second and third readings of bills.

Madam Sauve in her position as Speaker referred to no qualifications on the ability to pose questions following the speeches of our House's most important and prominent members.

In conclusion I would like to address why such questions should in fact be permitted.

First, it is a question of accountability. In the British Parliament there is a tradition of giving way which allows members to gain the floor briefly and rebut misleading or ambiguous statements in one another's speeches. This giving way has its own protocol but is extended to all ranks in the House; front benches as well as back benches.

Second, there is the question of fairness. Under the current interpretation there is no rebuttal to the speeches of the leaders or the first speakers of the government and Official Opposition, but other opposition members are quite properly held accountable through a question and comment period. We accept that minority parties are deprived of many of the privileges of the other two parties, but I ask whether this is a justifiable inequity.

In conclusion, I ask that you review, Mr. Speaker, my comments and then inform the House before the deliv-

ery of the budget later today whether or not questions will be permitted as provided for in Standing Order 84(7).

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Kamloops has raised an important point of order. I think that it would be best to consider carefully the points the hon. member has made.

Is the hon. parliamentary secretary seeking the floor?

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, we on the government side did wish to intervene, but I will yield the floor to my hon. friend from the Liberal Party to give him a chance to make his argument.

**Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands):** Mr. Speaker, since we had notice of the intention of the hon. member for Kamloops to raise this matter, I have had an opportunity to review some of the authorities, some of which he cited and other which appear in the Annotated Standing Orders, to assist the Chair in making a ruling on this point.

Without reviewing in detail the precedent raised in the 1983 Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne debate raised by the hon. member for Kamloops, I want to deal with the more recent precedents. There are four I have been able to find that deal with this issue.

The first was on March 27, 1985. In looking at this I ask Your Honour to bear in mind that Standing Order 84(7) is virtually identical in its wording with three other standing orders: Standing Order 43, Standing Order 74 and Standing Order 50(2) in so far as they deal with the question of questions and comments following speeches.

The words of the rule in my submission are quite clear. I think that the four precedents I am about to cite support the interpretation. I stress the words, particularly in French, because perhaps they are clearer than they are in English. If you do not mind, Mr. Speaker, I will quote the French reference in Standing Order 84(7), which states:

[*Translation*]

No Member, except the Minister of Finance, the Member speaking first on behalf of the Opposition, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, shall speak for more than twenty minutes at a time in the Budget Debate. Following the speech of each Member—