

Government Organization Act, 1970

are forbidden to enter the House by the Prime Minister is nothing but an unsubstantiated canard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chairman: Order, please. I hope we will not proceed too far on this point. I believe there is some relevancy attached to it. The subject of the question period and the roster system has been raised by hon. members in debate. In a sense it is relevant. The committee is now being asked to approve the appointment of ministers of state and I think some importance attaches to what is at issue. I will recognize the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond and then the hon. member for Saint John—Lancaster, but I hope we will not spend what is left of the sitting discussing the roster system.

Mr. MacInnis: I rise on a question of privilege. I do so prepared to stake my seat on the statement I have just made, providing the minister has the guts to stake his seat on the denial he has made of what I said. The precedent is already established on the record of this House. Whether or not the minister himself has been requested or instructed by the Prime Minister to remain out of the House when he is not on the roster, I say that ministers have been so requested—the record will prove it—and I will stake my seat upon what is contained in the written record if the minister is prepared to stake his denial in the same way.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I stand on what I said, that I as a member of the ministry and a minister of the Crown have been in the House on days during the question period other than my duty days in accordance with the roster; that I did not, that I do not have to—and I am sure I shall not have to—seek the permission of the Prime Minister in order to do this. If the hon. gentleman has loose in his head some idea that there is some curious system which he believes in, he is entitled to his beliefs. I am just saying what I know from my personal experience.

Mr. MacInnis: I apologize to the minister. I did not at any time say that the minister was the member of the government I had in mind. I did not deny the statement the minister has made but I said, and I will repeat it, that I will stake my seat on this premise that it is already recorded in the *Hansard* the statement which indicated that a member of the government was instructed to stay out of the House on a day on which he was not on the roster system. Again I say to the minister that I am not denying what he says, but if he intends to deny what I am saying he should stake his seat on it, because I will stake my seat on what I am saying.

Mr. Drury: I suggest we might terminate this discussion and that we do not waste the time of this House, or my time, by trying to deny what the hon. gentleman is saying.

Mr. Bell: Would the minister agree, once and for all, now that the matter has been brought up, to formally raise it with the Speaker? I know His Honour has avoided ruling on this matter when it has been brought

[Mr. Drury.]

up during the question period, but now we have it in the open and we shall be concerned with it to the extent that we wonder whether these new ministers will ever appear here; we think they may be civil servants and businessmen who will never be elected to Parliament—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bell: We want to know these things. Will these ministers of state be required to be here? Does the minister not agree we should formally get a decision from the Speaker on this entire roster system and settle the matter once and for all?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Drury: The hon. gentleman has asked whether the ministers of state will appear in the House. Let me assure him that the individuals appointed under this proposed legislation will have all the qualifications in respect of membership of this House that any other minister would have.

Mr. Bell: There will never be an appointment of a person who is not a Member of Parliament to be a minister of state; is that the assurance?

Mr. Drury: The same kind of people will be appointed to head departments, ministries of state and to be ministers without portfolio as has been the practice in the past.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Chairman, on the same question—

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Oxford.

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Chairman, I was wondering whether the minister who has just taken his seat would deal with one matter. In view of the fact that the party of which he is a member, in former days when I was a member of the House appointed a minister from Montreal who was not a member of the House—I refer to Mr. Marler who was Minister of Transport for a good many months before being elected to this chamber—would he give us an assurance that none of these ministers of state will be persons outside this House?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Chairman, I can only repeat my earlier statement and give the assurance that the appointment of departmental ministers, ministers of state and ministers without portfolio will follow the practice of the past.

Mr. MacInnis: Is the minister—

The Chairman: Order. I indicated a few moments ago that I thought this was a helpful interchange and I do not want, unless hon. members would like me to do so, to curtail it at this point. I have been trying to recognize the hon. member for Gander—Twillingate who has a contribution to make—

Mr. Lundrigan: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.