

External Affairs

Mr. Green: Oh, no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to answer the questions addressed to me by my hon. friends on the other side, and as there are only 25 minutes left before the conclusion of the debate this will be the only chance I will have to do so.

Mr. Knowles: You are assuming that they want the answers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do I understand there is consent that the minister shall answer at this time?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked—

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Stuart (Charlotte): Do you want to hear the answers? Are you afraid of them?

Mr. Lesage: Afraid again; always afraid.

Mr. Cardiff: Don't get too cocky.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there is not unanimous consent I cannot grant the floor to the minister.

Mr. Gauthier (Portneuf): They do not want the answers.

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, it appears that some wrath has been engendered on the other side of the house because the sacred cow has been kicked, and I mean by that the Department of External Affairs.

An hon. Member: That must be the answer.

Mr. Nesbitt: I have no doubt that because of what has taken place there will be numerous interruptions by hon. members opposite, and I should like to tell my hon. friends that they cannot shout me down and I will talk for the entire balance of the time if that is their wish.

Mr. Robichaud: You are afraid of an answer; you do not want an answer.

An hon. Member: This is the proof of fear.

Mr. Nesbitt: It seems that the Secretary of State for External Affairs and his seatmate the Minister of National Health and Welfare, together with their cohorts on the government side of the house, have been severely disturbed because the hon. members

in the official opposition have dared to criticize the activities of the Department of External Affairs.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that hindsight is much easier and very often better than foresight. Of course we know this to be true; but on the other hand the suggestion that it is a kind of lese majesty to even think of criticizing the Department of External Affairs is not in keeping with the parliamentary system of a democracy. I realize that because of the great length of time the present government have been in power they have developed this attitude that no one should criticize them, that they are always right and everyone else is always wrong. Surely, as has already been stated by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra and others, it is the right of the official opposition and other opposition parties to criticize the government if they have made errors, and it is our right even to criticize the Department of External Affairs without having it implied by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and more strongly by the Minister of National Health and Welfare that one is disloyal if he does such a thing.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. No one has suggested in this debate today—

Mr. Pickersgill: Or at any time.

Mr. Martin:—or at any time that it was not open to any hon. member to criticize the government on any question. The only suggestion I made today was that in the matter of foreign affairs, and particularly on a question so delicate as this, it was not in keeping with parliamentary tradition to put important questions concerning foreign policy without giving notice. There was no suggestion that there should not be the fullest debate. The Secretary of State for External Affairs is now trying to engage in a full debate, and the hon. gentleman opposite obstructs.

Mr. Churchill: You are making another speech.

Mr. Robichaud: You are afraid to hear the answers.

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order I submit to you that the Minister of National Health and Welfare should withdraw that last remark. He said the hon. member for Oxford is obstructing. The hon. member for Oxford has a perfect right to speak, just as much right as the minister; and for the minister to get up and make that statement just because the hon. member is exercising his right to speak is quite improper. The minister's statement should be withdrawn.