

An hon. Member: How do you know that?

Mr. Clark:—can he tell us if his colleagues are going to let him go to the conference?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whelan:—I would only refer the Leader of the Opposition to a statement made by E. P. Taylor when he spoke about offtrack betting. He said, "I had too much power in the cabinet. I threw too much weight and I was considered the heavyweight." I do not think there is much more I can say. My concern is that there be proper representation at that meeting of people who are really concerned about developing and improving the food policy with any new strategy possible. We would even consider anything the Leader of the Official Opposition might suggest.

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[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LAMBERT (BELLECHASSE)—ALLEGED CURTAILMENT OF LIBERTY OF SPEECH FOR SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY MEMBERS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Pursuant to our standing orders, Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a question of privilege. Since the beginning of the 3rd session of the 30th legislature, members of the Social Credit Party of Canada have been very rarely recognized by the Chair for more than one question during any single oral question period. On the other hand, hon. members of the party of the majority, contrary to practice, have now been granted the privilege of directing questions to the ministry, which was not customary in the parliaments which had adopted the British procedure. This new way of doing things has deprived our party of the right to ask more than one question. On January 25, 1978, the Chair asked for shorter questions and replies, something with which I fully agree. Unfortunately, these recommendations seem difficult to apply. I appreciate, however, the difficult position of the Chair in this respect. Since January 25, the preamble to some questions and to some ministerial replies has been somewhat lengthy.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I must draw the attention of the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) to the fact that, this afternoon, the oral question period started by questions from an hon. member of the official opposition, followed by the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent), and finally by the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada (Mr. Caouette).

First, the question asked by the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada was too long. Second, it dealt with a matter dating back to 1972 which continued in 1973, 1974 and 1975. It was therefore a very acceptable matter as a question on the order paper, which could also have been dealt with by writing to a minister, but as the hon. member is leader of a party in the House, I allowed him the question. The second question was a representation, and I also allowed it. As for the number

Privilege

of members by party now in the House, I gave the floor for some questions from the Social Credit Party of Canada and from the New Democratic Party. If the hon. member is seeking to establish proportions as to the number of members who are present, I am indeed under the impression that today and on all other days of sitting of the House I have been fair to the Social Credit Party of Canada. As for the matter of privilege, it could be unfair to other parties, because of the proportion of members in the House today and on other days. That is something I calculate very carefully every day, and I am convinced that this arrangement is quite fair to the Social Credit Party of Canada, and all other parties in the House. However, if the hon. member is looking for an opportunity to discuss this in private, it can be done, but today is an opposition day. I therefore believe that the hon. member should briefly conclude his remarks.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I accept your very judicious remarks, but I was about to conclude my question of privilege anyway. I did not have the opportunity to put it completely, but I will do so now with your permission.

Here is my conclusion, Mr. Speaker. Today the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) wanted to ask a very important question to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Buchanan). The current Minister of Public Works was not in this portfolio on the dates referred to by the hon. member for Témiscamingue and so, in order to make it easier for the minister to give him a satisfactory answer, the hon. member simply had to provide the minister with some references. It is my view that the hon. member for Témiscamingue was totally justified in giving the Minister of Public Works the opportunity to know about the facts that have preceded the event which was the object of the hon. member's question in order to make it possible for the minister to give an answer which would have been really satisfactory not only to the hon. member, but to the minister as well. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to criticize or question your decisions. Your responsibility is much greater than mine and it obliges you to make very quick decisions, which sometimes makes them questionable. In any event, you are the authority in this House and I submit to it.

With your permission, Your Honour, and at the request of my colleague from Témiscamingue, I ask that his question be discussed at ten o'clock.

● (1512)

[English]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received which is as follows:

February 2, 1978

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Bora Laskin, P.C., Chief Justice of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will