

*Point of Order*

each member a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto.

Mr. Speaker, the wording of this Standing Order is virtually identical to that of Standing Order 52 which governs another special debate in the House, the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

In considering then whether there can be questions and comments following the budget speech, it is quite pertinent to look to rulings regarding the nearly identical worded provisions for the address in reply.

For example, on December 9, 1983, the then Leader of the Opposition, who is currently our Prime Minister, replied to the Throne Speech. Following his comments my colleague, who is currently the member for Winnipeg Transcona, rose and attempted to direct a question. The then government House Leader interjected and asked the Speaker whether a question period was in order. He said:

As a Leader of the Opposition and the Right Hon. Prime Minister may speak for an unlimited time I should like you to make your position clear on this issue, that we may know where we stand in the future.

The Deputy Speaker was quite clear on this point when he said:

I shall quote from (the) Standing Order—which reads as follows:

Following the speech of each Member a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available—

That is strictly according to the rules. There has, however, been a practice of extending a courtesy which has normally been extended and the question period has been waived. However, according to the rules, the Hon. Member has the right to pose a question.

Following this clarification my colleague, out of courtesy, deferred his question. Nonetheless there was a clear ruling that according to the rules there is a right to pose a question.

So well understood was this right that when Journals branch published a chart of the time limits on speeches and debates in June 1984, it included on the chart the clear indication that questions and comments could be asked following the speeches of the Minister of Finance, the minister speaking first on behalf of the opposition, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

I have circulated to my hon. colleagues, the government House leader and yourself, as well as the House leader for the Official Opposition, the diagram that was submitted in 1984 by the Journals branch which makes it very clear that under the budget debate, whether it is the Minister of Finance or the minister speaking first on behalf of the opposition, the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition, while they have no time limit on their speeches, very clearly there is an opportunity to ask questions or make comments on their presentations.

You probably recall, Mr. Speaker, that that Journals publication of 1984 followed the 1982 report of the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedures. The Minister of Justice, the Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds, the member for Burin—St. George's, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the member for Winnipeg Transcona and the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grace are current members in the House who served on that special committee. After examining the proceedings, it is perfectly clear that their recommendations intended that the 10 minute question and comment period follow the lead addresses of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Official Opposition and so on.

Apparently this new interpretation that people have followed is based on a ruling given on June 7, 1985. During the debate on the Meech Lake Accord on that day, following the comments of the then Leader of the Official Opposition, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, the then Minister of Justice rose and asked if he could ask a question. The Acting Speaker ruled that a question could not be put. He ruled as follows: "The first three speakers have unlimited time and I believe those who have unlimited time do not have a question or comment period, in accordance with Standing Order 35(1)."

Standing Order 35(1) is now found in two Standing Orders, Standing Order 43 and Standing Order 74. Standing Order 43 begins: "Unless otherwise provided in these Standing Orders—" and proceeds to define the question and comment period that follows speeches during motions.

As I have just explained, it is otherwise provided in the Standing Orders that such a provision is made for the budget speech specifically.