

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

statement before the Christmas recess in which the valuable role of the National Film Board in developing a Canadian identity will be recognized and which will also remove fears that this institution is slowly being strangled by the government?

**An hon. Member:** Spit it out.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** As soon as the noise from the back benches on the government side stops, I will continue my point of order, not before.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I do not ask Your Honour to rule on this at present if Your Honour is not prepared to do so, but perhaps on another occasion you would clarify whether members of this House may direct questions to chairmen of committees of this House, and particularly whether or not unanimous reports of those committees can be concurred in by the House at the proper time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The point raised by the hon. member is very interesting. I must say that I had to make a very quick decision when the question was asked by the smiling hon. member for Peace River. I had some doubts at that point whether we had any precedents indicating that the vice-chairman of any committee should be allowed to answer a question on behalf of the chairman. Whether that hon. member sits on one side of the House or the other is immaterial to the Chair. I see nothing wrong with that.

My objection was directed to the substance of the question. I had the impression at that moment that the question was of the type which is normally decided by the committee itself and not by the House. I may have been wrong in that judgment. I will review *Hansard* in the course of the evening or take a look at the *Hansard* "takes" later today and determine whether the question should have been allowed. If the question was in order, certainly the hon. member who is the acting chairman of the committee, may be allowed to answer it.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have not yet made my ruling.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I only add that I and other members of the House have directed questions to committee chairmen during this session. I just wish to draw Your Honour's attention to that and to the fact that they have been allowed.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have no intention of pursuing the discussion with the hon. member for Oxford, although the point is very interesting. I have agreed with him that that is the situation. I have told him, as I tell hon. members

[Translation]

**INDUSTRY****GOLD MINING—POLICY RESPECTING GRANTS**

**Mr. Oza Tétrault (Villeneuve):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Finance Minister a question.

Does the government intend to maintain or revise its policy of assistance to gold mining now that the price of gold remains at \$35 per ounce?

[English]

**Mr. Burton:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the Secretary of State was prepared to respond to my question. It is a matter about which many members are concerned.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. In view of the form in which the question was put, the Chair was not prepared to allow the minister to reply to the question.

**Mr. Burton:** May I rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I feel embarrassed to have to bring to the attention of hon. members that the question period expired a few minutes ago. I think that I did my best to try to allow as many members as possible to ask their questions, but unfortunately many were not given an opportunity to do so. I have made a note of those who were not called today and will try to give them some preference tomorrow. I apologize to hon. members for the situation.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A few moments ago a question was put by the hon. member for Peace River to the acting chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I was going to raise a similar question but did not do so in view of the question put by the hon. member for Peace River. I note that Your Honour did not give the hon. member for Athabasca, who is the vice-chairman of the committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, an opportunity to answer. Perhaps Your Honour could clarify the situation, not only the one which arose on this occasion but those that might arise in the future.