

Privilege—Mr. Caccia

The Member knows that. I presume he must know since he is raising the ultimate parliamentary—

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The Member might also please keep his seat while the Speaker is addressing the House. Beauchesne is very clear on the granting of supplementaries. I take it the Hon. Member does not know the citation. I will quote it. Supplementary Questions, Beauchesne, Citation 371:

Although there may be no debate on an answer, further questions, as may be necessary for the elucidation of the answers that have been given . . . may be addressed to a Minister. The extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker.

The House well knows, and I think the Hon. Member well knows because I have said it many times, that Question Period is for the purpose of asking questions. Therefore, I have consistently done my best to show Members, in whatever ways I can, that long preambles to questions are not going to be tolerated by the Speaker. By now the House must know that is the Speaker's view.

The Member will also know, since he was addressing his question to the Chair, as he must, that I waved and signaled to him three times to tell him that his preamble was going on too long. I held the stop-watch up that I use to indicate that he at that point was going well beyond what was appropriate. Nevertheless, he chose to continue with his preamble. He chose, with respect, to take practically a minute before he got to the beginning of his question.

Therefore, in the exercise of my discretion, without embarrassing the Member by rising to cut him off, which is my ultimate sanction, I indicated as best I could to the Member that he should come to the question immediately. Because he did not, I chose to exercise my discretion not to grant a supplementary. I do not find, with due respect, that a breach of privilege or order has resulted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Does the Hon. Member have a separate point of order?

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege to bring to your attention the following facts. My question was not unduly lengthy compared to other questions. Second, and more important, Sir, if the granting of a supplementary is fully the prerogative of the Speaker and it is granted to all other colleagues of mine, it is not fair to deny it to this Member when he is asking for a supplementary. That is definitely a discriminatory decision which has affected my ability to ask a supplementary. I do not believe my question was unduly long compared to other questions asked in this House. I still feel that I have a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate that the Member is upset because he was not granted a supplementary. I understand he feels that way. Therefore, I will take no offence and make no comment on the fact that a comment has been made about a ruling. I think that is fair. The Member is upset.

The point I am trying to make to the Member and to all Members is that I will not tolerate long preambles. The Member's question today was by some length the longest question today. I have for the last three or four days—the Hon. Member thinks his question was not. I had a stop-watch on his question and can guarantee him that he was 30 per cent longer than any other questioner today. I can guarantee him that.

At some point I do not have any option but to try and signal Members to come to the question. If Members do not do that, then there must be some penalty. The only penalty I have to invoke is to do what I did. I will continue to do it in a non-discriminatory way against any Members who put questions at too great a length in my view, as I will continue to come back at Ministers who in my view make too long an answer to a question when they can use the procedure of Statements by Ministers if they want to make a statement.

Ms. Copps: You didn't cut off the Prime Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: With great respect to the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), I have cut off the Prime Minister a total number of times once more than I have cut off the Hon. Member for Hamilton East.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I think we have a point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: If the Hon. Government House Leader tells the Prime Minister that, I will do nothing for him in the future!

I am trying as best I can and will continue to try to apply this policy equally. If some Hon. Members think it is not applied equally, then I suggest they get a stop-watch and we can debate the time. What in fact is happening is that the Ministers answered their questions today, with one exception, in less than 60 seconds.

Ms. Copps: They didn't answer them at all. They passed them off.

• (1210)

Mr. Speaker: With respect, it is very difficult for the Speaker to find that Members really care about the questions of privilege and points of order they put to the Speaker when they do not listen.

My point is that I have risen to try to help the Hon. Member for Davenport and others understand what happened today. Because the Hon. Member's question was excessively long today, I chose not to grant him a supplementary question. That is my right. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East may not think so but it is. That right will be exercised against all Members in those circumstances and it will be exercised against all Ministers who speak too long. Hon. Members should know that it is my view that Question Period is in the