

Mr. Speaker: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order, and then we will hear the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Milliken: Point of order Mr. Speaker. My question No. 17 on the Order Paper is still sitting there. It is dated May 13. That does not sound that old although I did ask for a 45 day reply. In fact it is the same question I put on on February 25 in the last session. It is still not answered. This is an outrageous delay.

I know why the government does not want to release the information. It will be humiliated and embarrassed by the result of the release. I submit that it is not proper for this government to sit twiddling its thumbs instead of providing answers to questions in this House which of course it is obliged to do. They are answerable to the people in this House. These questions are put by members of Parliament for good reason and we are entitled to replies.

I request Your Honour to impress upon the government the need for dealing with this in an expeditious way. My question is not the only one from May 13 but it dates from February 25 and this reply has been forthcoming for far too long.

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POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I have two points of order, the first of which has to do with the fact that yesterday during Question Period a question was asked by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization.

I understand that this is the second time in recent weeks that a parliamentary secretary has asked a question.

I am sure you will know, Mr. Speaker, that the asking of questions by parliamentary secretaries is not established or accepted practice in the Canadian House of Commons. It may come to be at some point, but I am sure you are also aware that we are engaged in a process of reviewing the format and the nature of Question Period. A subcommittee of the Standing Committee on

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House Management has been struck to do this and this work will be ongoing as part of the work of that committee and as part of the intention of the government to review the format and the nature of Question Period.

It seems to me that that work should not be pre-empted or anticipated or in any way affected by *ad hoc* changes to Question Period such as are constituted by this repetition of permitting a parliamentary secretary to ask a question in the House of Commons.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this is an oversight, a second oversight. I hope that you will be able to tell us that this was so, that we will not have to worry about this again, and that the process of reviewing and reforming Question Period can carry on without the anxiety of thinking there is some kind of process happening extraneous to what the committee is doing.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I want to respond immediately to the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona. He raises a point and he is correct that twice within the last couple of weeks a parliamentary secretary has been recognized.

I want to say first of all to the hon. member and to the House that that was an inadvertence and an oversight on my part for which I apologize if it has caused any anxiety.

I want to make it very clear that the sixth edition of Beauchesne's, citation 413, deals with questions by parliamentary secretaries and I read the section:

Those such as Parliamentary Secretaries who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the Government ought not to use the time of the Question Period for the privilege of asking questions of the Government.

It cites *Debates*, November 5, 1974, pages 1059-64.

That practice has been adhered to and there may have been a slippage out of inadvertence, but that practice has been adhered to and I want to assure the House that I am not unilaterally changing the practice.

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona on another point.

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): On another point of order, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your response to my first point of order.