

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Cumberland rises on a question of privilege.

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to your attention that two days ago the hon. member for Halifax asked this exact question of the Minister of National Defence, and at that time you found it out of order.

[Translation]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

MR. CALVIN MacDONALD—REQUEST FOR HEARING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the right hon. Prime Minister.

Has the right hon. Prime Minister received a communication or a telegram from a former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Mr. Calvin MacDonald, asking to be heard before the judicial inquiry on national security, and requesting that his case be looked into on a special basis?

[English]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, but I shall be glad to make inquiries.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NATO—INQUIRY CONCERNING COMMUNICATION FROM PRESIDENT DE GAULLE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the exchange between President de Gaulle and President Johnson as it relates to NATO, wherein President Johnson has accused President de Gaulle of seeking to destroy NATO, could the Prime Minister tell the house whether or not he has any communication with President de Gaulle or the French government?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have not had, that I know of, any official communication from the French government on this matter. If and when it comes we shall naturally give it consideration and discuss the matter with our NATO allies.

[Mr. Douglas.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

REQUEST FOR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON ORDER PAPER

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Public Works in his capacity as house leader and ask him whether, in view of the fact that during the 1962-63 session up until February 22 there were 1,467 written questions, compared with 900 odd questions on the order paper now, of which only 126 have been answered, he would prevail upon his colleagues to do something, to answer those questions.

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I do not have the exact figure, but over 600 questions have been answered. Those are answers to written questions. There is, however, a real problem about questions on the order paper that are not in accordance with the rules. Some that are in accordance with the rules are put in such a form that a quick reply is impossible. A great deal of improvement could be made if there were better draftmanship of the questions.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Queens): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. minister who has just cast aspersions on hon. members would indicate in what manner question 71 is wrong, in which it is asked how many dominion-provincial conferences have been held since a certain date. That question has been standing there since January 18.

Mr. McIlraith: I think if the hon. member will look at that question—I can tell the hon. member what is wrong with it, in a moment.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I submit to the hon. member and to the minister that this exchange is not entirely according to the rules. The hon. member might ask why the question has not been answered, and whether it will be answered at an early date, but he cannot ask what is wrong with it. Neither can the minister say what is wrong with the question.

Mr. Macquarrie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker; I was merely seeking guidance as to how I might conduct myself in accordance with the traditions of this house. Now I will ask why the question was not answered.