

No. 565 which, as he indicated, was placed on the Order Paper in May, 1986.

The Hon. Member should recall that on July 24 the House prorogued. The Hon. Member knows the rules. He has spent a longer period of time in the provincial legislature than here in the House of Commons—

Mr. Boudria: Not quite. It is about even now.

Mr. Wise:—but he knows the rules very well.

When the House prorogues, items or questions on the Order Paper cease to exist. Therefore, the Minister has no facility on behalf of the Department to make the information available to the Hon. Member.

However, we have not been prorogued since July 24. At no other time in the past has the Hon. Member had sufficient interest to raise the matter in the form of a question during Question Period, nor has he demonstrated sufficient interest to reinstate the question. Consequently, the Department has had no facility to respond.

In respect of the interest of the reporter for the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, it is quite true that he certainly has an interest in the subject and has sought identical information through the access to information legislation. In keeping with the spirit of the law, my department provided him with the information. In fact, the Hon. Member said “yesterday”; my note indicates that yesterday we released, under access to information, the same material.

I have in hand a signed copy of question No. 565 of May 5, 1986. I hope this explanation will satisfy the Hon. Member, and I will be happy to send a copy across the aisle to him.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell in reply.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong debate. Obviously the point is that the question was tabled in the House on May 5, 1986. The question could have been answered in plenty of time before the House prorogued. Obviously a response was prepared before the House prorogued, otherwise it would not be in the form that I now have in my hand.

● (1530)

Given that the reply was prepared on the proper document which is normally used to table in the House of Commons, one can only assume that the officials of the Minister's office had prepared it in order for it to be tabled in the House of Commons and in proper time. Of course, had that time expired, no one would have done the work uselessly.

Given that that is the case, I would submit that the people in the Minister's office had the intention of providing me with that answer, and I still submit that when a document is to be prepared for tabling in the House in response to rules of the House, pursuant to a question asked by an Hon. Member and

tabled in the House, that information should be provided to the House at least at the same time as it is provided to anyone else. If it is provided to anyone else previously, I would consider that to be the same as if I were to leak the contents of a committee report to a reporter prior to it being tabled in the House. I have spoken on that particular issue on a number of occasions previously, chastising those who have leaked committee reports to others prior to their being tabled in the House.

It would seem to me that the Minister, prior to or at the same time as providing this document to the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* should have made it a point to provide it to Parliament because it is not the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* that sought this information, it is the House of Commons of Canada through a question I placed on the Notice Paper. That information is not only mine once it is tabled but it belongs to every single Member of the House. The answer to that is not provided to me but indeed to you, Mr. Speaker, as our chairman here in the House of Commons, for the benefit of all of us.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond very briefly to the point raised by the Hon. Member in his concluding remarks. It is clear that during the course of the first weeks of July, the department prepared the necessary response to the Hon. Member's question. Under normal circumstances, that question would clearly have been answered when we returned to the House in September. Of course, the House prorogued on July 24 and therefore there was no longer a session and there was indeed therefore no longer a question.

There is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the department, the Minister or any other official retained this information and withheld it from the House of Commons. That is simply not the case. By the time the material was ready, the House was no longer sitting, and of course the House subsequently prorogued.

Had the Hon. Member wished to do so, all he would have had to do when we reconvened that fall was to ask the question again. By then, of course, the information would have been available, as it has been available since that time and as the Minister now prepares to offer it to the Hon. Member and the House. It seems to me that there is no question of privilege here whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened very carefully to the complaint of the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria). At first, I was puzzled at what had happened, but I think Hon. Members would agree with me when I say that the Minister's statement and the statement of the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary cleared up the chronology of what in fact did happen.

I must advise the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that under the circumstances, it is not a question of privilege. However, I might add that this might have been