

*Order Paper Questions*

● (1410)

**Mr. Hellyer:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege with regard to questions 2529 to 2538 which have been on the order paper since July 19. They are not complicated questions. They simply ask for statistical information. The failure of the government to provide the information indicates either gross incompetence on the one hand or a cover-up on the other.

This is not just a question of lack of courtesy on the part of the government. Something more fundamental is involved. The minister has already given the Canadian Association of Architects part of the information I have requested in these questions. In other words, he has taken the liberty to provide information to a private organization which he has refused to make available to parliament. Personally, I think this is a shameful situation and in fact is a breach of the privileges of the House. Is the minister satisfied that the opinion of the Association of Architects of Ontario is of more value to his deliberations than the opinion of parliament would be in respect of these matters?

The other day the Prime Minister told us we would do better if we gave notice of our questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member except for just a moment. He rose on a question of privilege. The hon. member has failed to give the Chair notice of his question of privilege. It is not about something that has risen in the last minute or so. He is referring to a situation which, according to his complaint, has existed for some time. Perhaps in those circumstances hon. members would be well advised to heed the Standing Order and give the required notice in order to facilitate matters. I assume the hon. member is rising on a point of order rather than on a question of privilege and he will be heard on that basis.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Mr. Speaker, the other day the Prime Minister suggested that we give notice of our questions. I should like to repeat that when we do give notice, as in the case in point, no answers are given. When we do not give notice we receive shallow, superficial or misleading answers. We just cannot win.

**Mr. Basford:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Trinity may I say that in respect of most of the questions to which he referred answers have been approved by me. Those answers and the translation thereof are in the process somewhere and I presume will appear on Monday.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the point of order raised by the hon. member for Leeds. Until this government changed the format of the public accounts it was the practice that the names of all lawyers hired by the Department of Justice were shown and the amount each received was also shown in the public accounts. This government discontinued that practice and is now keeping that information secret. The hon. member for Leeds is entitled to that kind of information. It used to be public and should be made public again.

**Mr. Reid:** Mr. Speaker, on the question raised by the hon. member for Leeds, the matter of the people employed

[Mr. Cossitt.]

on the basis of a contract by CMHC is still under discussion because it has not been traditional to make available that information. CMHC is considered to be an independent corporation.

I also wish to bring to the attention of the hon. member for Yukon that up until today some 3,344 questions have been placed on the order paper and 2,755 have been answered or 82 per cent. I would point out that this is the greatest number of questions ever put to any government and there has been a greater percentage answered up to this date than ever before by any government.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nielsen:** On that point of order, Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned the number of questions that have been answered by the government. The reason the government encounters so many questions on the order paper is that we are not getting answers in the oral question period or in committees. I draw attention to the fact that on the order paper there are questions going back to January 4—some of them from our friends on the left—January 18, February 28, March 9. Let the government answer those. The reason they do not is that for the most part the answers will prove to be politically embarrassing for them, and they are deliberately keeping public information secret.

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to members of parliament rising on points of order relating to questions on the order paper.

**An hon. Member:** Thanks, Al.

**Mr. MacEachen:** But I do object to an experienced member like the hon. member for Trinity using a point of order or a question of privilege to make an attack on the government which he is incapable of making in a more effective way elsewhere.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** Also, I refuse to accept the practice whereby the hon. member for Yukon can suggest that there has been any cover-up in the response of the government to questions that had been put by members of the opposition. My parliamentary secretary has stated that in this session alone we have answered more than 2,700 questions. The right hon. member for Prince Albert, who is shaking his head, should go back to the record of his five sessions in office during the twenty-fourth parliament. We have answered more questions in this session than the government of the right hon. member did in the more than five years when he was prime minister.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, there is one point to be made, that hon. members who are genuinely interested in getting speedy answers to questions and who want to use some discretion in putting questions down can co-operate in that process. But what has happened, and it is obvious