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MULTICULTURALISM GRANTS

Question No. 179—Ms. Mitchell:

With respect to grants given out by the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in 1989 (a) what is the (i) maximum (ii) minimum (iii) average length of time it takes to process funding applications (b) how does this compare with other departments (c) what (i) number (ii) percentage of the applications are given approval for funding (d) what is the (i) name of the recipient (ii) purpose (iii) amount of each grant?

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[English]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the Order Paper Questions. This is an issue that has been brought to the attention of Mr. Speaker before, but unfortunately I must bring it to the attention of the Speaker today.

• (1130)

I have a question on the Order Paper that dates back to October 30. I recognize that it is a rather lengthy question. Nevertheless, the 45 days permitted under the rules, because this is a 45-day type question pursuant to the Standing Order, have now extended to close to 90 days; in other words, double the length of time. I look for some guidance from the Speaker and the parliamentary secretary to getting a commitment for an answer from the government.

I also bring the following to your attention. Question No. 182 dated November 9 also standing in my name is a relatively short, concise and I think simple question to answer. I think even the government would recognize that it is a very uncomplicated type of question. It has been on the Order Paper since that time.

One of the side effects of this—I draw this to your attention—is the fact that Standing Order 39(4) says that no member shall have more than four questions on the Order Paper at any one time. Because of the fact that we cannot get responses to these questions, I am prevented by the rules of the House from asking new questions. In other words, I cannot place questions on the Order Paper because my spaces are all taken up. They are taken up because the government is not answering the ques-

Routine Proceedings

tions that I placed already and which have been there for some time.

The Clerk of the Journals Branch could easily inform you, Mr. Speaker, that I have a backlog of questions resting on his desk right now. I am waiting for these questions to be answered in order to be able to pose those new questions which I believe to be of public interest and, in any case, which are my right to ask as a Member of Parliament.

Again, I hope that you would look into the matter, Mr. Speaker. I am looking for your guidance as well as the co-operation of the parliamentary secretary so that we can get answers to these questions and any others that have been on the Order Paper, clearly marked under the 45-day provision, and which have been there for a considerable period of time.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to call upon the parliamentary secretary because I am sure hon. members would not suspect for one moment that he had dreamed up this elaborate plan to keep the hon. member from putting questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that I did not do any such thing. I certainly would not want to in any way impinge on the member's rights and in fact responsibilities and obligations to ask questions.

I do, however, want to say that we have had so far 145 priority questions asked and we have been successful in answering 82.8 per cent of those. Those are the priority questions. With the regular questions, we are presently sitting at 88.7 per cent. We certainly are doing our best to make sure that we answer those as close to the deadlines as we can and, if possible, to exceed them.

In the particular question that my friend refers to, I was not able to lay my hand on that question. If I am not mistaken, it is a very serious question that the member has asked regarding one of the trips that the Prime Minister took. What the member would like to know, among other things, is how many pieces of luggage each member who went on that trip took.

In all fairness, it does take us a fair amount of time to track down individual people to ask them how many pieces of luggage they took, what they took and whether they put it on the plane or whether they carried it on board with them. If the hon. member thinks that is a serious and important question, then I am sorry, but he is