

Motions for Papers

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I recognize the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe on a point of order.

Mr. Beatty: I rise on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to draw the Parliamentary Secretary's attention to question No. 2,670 which stands in my name, which was placed on the Order Paper on June 23, 1981 asking about Cabinet Ministers and the use they have made of Government aircraft. Can the Parliamentary Secretary tell the House why that question is yet to be answered almost two years after the day? Will he also give us an answer with regard to question No. 2,673, also put on the Order Paper on June 23, 1981, asking on what occasions Cabinet Ministers employed or otherwise used the services of professional speech writers. Why could he not have answered by now?

• (1510)

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, the answer again is that I have not been provided with the answer by the appropriate Ministers. I will certainly make inquiries. I will be happy to see what I can do to expedite the forthcoming answers.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, if I could continue my line of questioning to the Parliamentary Secretary, I would point out to him that question No. 3,218 asked by myself on October 23, 1981, asked if the Prime Minister travelled to Washington, D.C. in July, 1981 and, if so, what was the total cost of the trip and what percentage will be paid by the taxpayers.

Question No. 3,219, also asked on October 23, 1981, deals with another almost world jaunt by the Prime Minister to Australia, Korea, the Philippines and Fiji in September and October of 1981. That question has not been answered.

Again, there is another trip to Mexico inquired about in question No. 3,220. Could the Parliamentary Secretary indicate why those three questions are so tough? Who really has the ultimate responsibility to report back to the House with answers? You are handling this almost as poorly as Canadair itself.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to look into those matters on behalf of the Hon. Member. I am not in a position to advise him as to the exact status of the preparation of the answers to those questions.

However, I would totally reject the suggestion that these are jaunts. They are official working visits on behalf of the country wherein the Prime Minister represents all of us. He does a very good job and it is money well spent.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I think what this calls into question is the whole process that is followed here. I already raised a point of order some weeks ago with respect to question No. 2,672 which was put on the Order Paper on June 23, 1981,

asking about public opinion surveys commissioned by the Government since the last election. The Parliamentary Secretary undertook then, as he is undertaking today, to look into our representation.

What does he do about this? Does he not do anything? Is there any point to our raising questions with him that have not been answered for years? Does he not feel that it is his responsibility not simply to wait for some initiative by the bureaucrats but, as Parliamentary Secretary, to start going through the Order Paper and calling up these people to ask when we will get answers to these questions?

No other parliamentary system in the world with this sort of dilatory behaviour on the part of the Public Service and Government would be tolerated in terms of withholding information from Parliament. Does he think that he is doing his job if he does not follow up on these unanswered questions after years?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there is any other parliamentary system in the world that spends as much money in the preparation of answers to Parliament.

Mr. Beatty: Storing them.

Mr. Smith: I might say that as of today the Government has answered 4,126 questions this session. That amounts to 83.1 per cent of all questions put on the Order Paper this session. Some of them have been lengthy responses to questions tabled by the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty). I think one response a few days ago was about two or three inches thick.

Any suggestion that serious efforts are not being made to answer these questions is, of course, quite inaccurate. I want to assure the Hon. Member, however, that I will make representations to the Ministers involved, as I always do. Upon receiving a reply it will be tabled in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Shall all remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Shall all notices of motions be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.