

VIA RAIL

REPLACEMENT OF ROLLING STOCK

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Canadians have been waiting for years through two Governments to hear whether we are going to get replacements for the ancient VIA Rail rolling stock. Can the Minister advise this House whether he has finally obtained funds from Cabinet for the replacement of that VIA Rail stock?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I was asked a similar question the other day by the transportation critic for the hon. gentleman's Party. I gave him a succinct and, if I might say so, brilliant answer at that time.

TIMING OF GOVERNMENT DECISION

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister can advise us and all the people of Canada exactly when a decision will be made, or do we have to go through this like a long-running epic which is years in the making and costs billions?

● (1500)

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have that matter before my confrères now and, before too many suns or moons have passed, I hope to have an answer for the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for York Centre. One question, please.

* * *

THE JUDICIARY

NEWFOUNDLAND SUPREME COURT VACANCIES

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Minister of Justice. What possible excuse is there for allowing a 20 per cent vacancy in the Supreme Court in Newfoundland? The Government should be appointing judges because 20 per cent of the spaces are vacant. There is a backlog of cases. What is the excuse for that?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the backlog of cases has nothing to do with any shortage of judges. Newfoundland amended its legislation in the past year to require the appointment of three more persons to the Court of Appeal. The present Court of Appeal already has four and is in perfect order to function. Newfoundland passed legislation to provide for two more District Court judges. They have now been amalgamated with the Supreme Court. There is no emergency at the moment with respect to the number of judges in Newfoundland and we are considering, long and well, who we appoint to ensure that people of the highest quality are appointed to those positions.

Privilege—Mr. Lewis

PRIVILEGE

QUESTION PERIOD—ALLEGED PRACTICE OF IMPUTING MOTIVES AND CASTING ASPERSIONS

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a brief question of privilege. I noted in the media this morning that Members of Parliament on all sides of the House are approaching Question Period on a different basis and I think we are providing a better product and, for the Opposition and the Government, a better Question Period.

There were certain aspects of Question Period today which caused me concern and I want to raise a brief question of privilege so that you might take the time to review the "blues" and see if you are in agreement with my point.

I am concerned about offences against *Beauchesne Citation 359(7)* with respect to Members of Parliament imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it. I am speaking specifically with respect to appointments to the Human Rights Commission. The Government has taken great strides, with the co-operation of the Opposition, to make sure that appointments are reviewed by standing committees of Parliament. It does this House no good and does the appointees no good to have their reputations slandered in the House by Members, whether inadvertently or not. I would ask you to review that citation in *Beauchesne* and take what happened today into account.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to your attention, and particularly to the attention of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis), that Citation 359 in *Beauchesne* are only the guidelines that were set down some ten years ago by a previous Speaker who described to the House how that Speaker would use his discretion during Question Period. These guidelines have been superseded by others, most recently the guidelines set down by the previous Speaker, the Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley).

I suggest, with the utmost respect, that Citation 359 is not a citation that is binding on the House or on Mr. Speaker. In any event, whatever this citation says, the kinds of questions about which the Parliamentary Secretary complains were asked over and over again, without complaint, by his own Members when they were in opposition.

I repeat what I said before, when we saw an attempt by the Government to impugn the efforts of the current Speaker to do his duty, that it does not sit well for Members on the government side to make this kind of comment when they refused to follow this course of action when they were in opposition.

The facts speak for themselves. Mr. Speaker, I leave this matter in your hands.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I believe in keeping with the attempt to reform the House of Commons, that these issues should not be brought up at the end of