

tion. This is one of the faults of our system. It is something to which we must address ourselves.

Every time this matter is raised the parliamentary secretary states that they answer 90 per cent of the questions. That is their record. I do not know how it stands statistically. I would not doubt the word of the parliamentary secretary that in statistical terms that is true.

The problem raised by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Beatty) was with regard to the kind of answer he received and the circumstances under which he received it. To rely on that citation in Beauchesne is to evade an answer or give a non-answer. Statistically I would not argue with the parliamentary secretary, but that is what is happening with regard to answering questions.

The question raised by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) is very simple. It reads:

1. By department and by community, how many positions have been made or will be made available under the Federal Labour Intensive Program?

That kind of information must be in the hands of a competent department in order to do the planning. It has to be there and available. To say that it is not available or it is hard to find, is to say that the ministry involved is incompetent, is not doing studies and so on.

It is wrong, innocently wrong, or I suppose innocently improper is the best way to describe it, for the parliamentary secretary time and again to say that all questions cost a considerable amount of money. I realize there is work caused in the public service as a result of questions by members of parliament because I represent a number of public servants who do the work in respect of answering questions. They tell me that is the case. Of course, that is their job. Not one has ever complained about doing his job.

I become concerned when I hear colleagues in the House worrying about questions that are not answered when the public service has done its job, when the answers are prepared and available, but the minister or someone else does not let those answers see the light of day. That is a matter which concerns me. Perhaps at some stage during the course of this parliament we could examine the process to ensure that does not happen. The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) says it is nonsense. If that were so, I would be relieved.

I know a large number of public servants who prepare answers to questions. They do not complain about that. I worry that sometimes their work does not get to the floor of the House of Commons because somebody's ox has been gored. That is the suspicion I have. Perhaps some day the parliamentary secretary can indicate the process to the House of Commons so that we can be relieved of that doubt.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise because, in his earlier intervention, the parliamentary secretary made some statements with which I take sharp issue. I have had a large number of questions on the order paper session after session. I admit that some of them have been complicated. When it has taken a long time to get an answer, I have not complained.

S.O. 26

A year and a half or two years ago I put on the order paper of that session a series of questions having to do with Crown corporations. Each one was a very simple question. I will quote one which I have again placed on the order paper. I quote question No. 85:

1. Who (a) is the president (b) are the vice-presidents of the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority?

2. What is the annual salary in each case?

I have a series of questions, each along the same line, asking about a particular Crown corporation.

Had the government said it has not been the practice to divulge that kind of information with regard to Crown corporations, I probably would have accepted that answer, gone to the committee where the Crown corporation reports, in this case the transport committee, and discussed it with the minister. These questions would have then been off the order paper.

I do not do what the minister accuses some members of doing, create a great deal of work for public servants, then the end of the session comes, they do not have a chance to report, and the questions are forgotten. I waited until the first day of this session and I again placed the questions on the order paper. I repeat, they have been on the order paper for a year and a half or two years.

These are not complicated questions. They would not be difficult to answer. If the government wanted, I am sure it could obtain the information in a day or two, answer the questions, and have them removed from the order paper. If the government is embarrassed because it is paying too much or too little and therefore does not want to answer the questions, I suggest to the parliamentary secretary a lot of time could be saved by simply saying it does not want to answer the questions. I would not then have to get up every two or three months to ask what is happening.

I sympathize with hon. members who complain that their questions are not being answered or that it is taking a very long time to get answers, because I frequently receive that kind of treatment in this House.

● (1632)

MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 26

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

PURCHASE OF FIGHTER PLANES

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave, seconded by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt), to move the adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the proposal of a cabinet committee to seek the approval and commitment of the cabinet to the purchase of fighter planes at the total of \$2.3 billion in 1977 dollars, on the grounds that