

Order Paper Questions

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Question No. 3,721—**Mr. Herbert:**

What percentage of public servants working in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in Quebec indicate English as their first official language?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources reports as follows: 39.1 percent.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Young: Madam Speaker, I have a question for the parliamentary secretary. Over the past several weeks I have been asking when I can expect an answer to questions Nos. 3,380 to 3,438 concerning the recommendations in the "Obstacles" report. I have been advised consistently that the parliamentary secretary has been "in hot pursuit" of answers to these questions. I am beginning to think what we are getting here are repeat shows of the "Bugs Bunny Road Runner Hour".

These questions are extremely important. The minister responsible previously advised us that these questions have already been responded to by the cabinet. I fail to see what possible reason there can be for not providing the answers to these questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Peterson: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member very much for drawing this matter to our attention.

Mr. Young: Again.

Mr. Peterson: It is a matter I will be prepared to bring to the attention of my hon. colleague on his return.

Just for the information of this House, I would like to draw to its attention that to date we have answered 2,809 questions, including those which have been answered today. We are working very hard to respond in a responsible parliamentary fashion to the questions which have been brought to our attention.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 58—CROWNSNEST PASS FREIGHT RATES

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville) moved:

That this House condemns the government for abandoning the historical and statutory rights of western grain producers by proposing an end to the Crownsnest Pass freight rate, thereby giving guarantees to the railways and not to the producers; regrets that an inquiry has been established without clearly defined terms of reference, without adequate provision for producer participation and without reference to Parliament; approves in principle the payment by the government on an annual basis of an amount equivalent to the 1981-82 railway revenue shortfall, provided that adequate performance and capacity guarantees are met by the railways; and, calls on the government to refer the document "Policy Statement on Western Rail Transportation" to the Standing Committee on Transport for full consideration.

● (1210)

He said: Mr. Speaker, on February 8 the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) made a major policy statement on behalf of the Liberal government in the city of Winnipeg, to the effect that the government proposes substantially to alter a historic and statutory provision which affects not only the producers of Canada but the whole economy of western Canada. The implications of this policy are enormous.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say on behalf of this party that we protest in the strongest way possible the fact that the minister chose to make the announcement outside the House. We find this particularly offensive inasmuch as the House was in session at the time. This is a matter of vital importance to western Canada, Mr. Speaker, and it is also an issue of national importance. It could change in a fundamental way the lifestyle of many Canadians. The statutory rate could be considered the pillar of western Canadian society and the western Canadian economy. It should be recognized that there is a tremendous amount of emotion in the west about the subject of statutory change.

In view of all this we would have thought that the minister would have had the common sense to stand in his place in the House and make his announcement and then be available to respond to the questions of Members of Parliament from that region in order to clarify matters.

It appears that Parliament and parliamentary committees are going to be ignored in this process. It also appears that in the next four to six months a backroom deal will be negotiated in private, that Parliament will stand idly by while a group appointed by the minister strikes up a deal in camera. The minister has told us that if farmers do not like it or do not agree, then he will proceed unilaterally. In other words, the terms of the agreement will be imposed; the government will go ahead anyway.

What I find even more disturbing is a report which appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on February 8 in which the minister is reported as saying that the government cannot indulge in a great consultative process with the public. I am not sure