

Mr. Blenkarn: Madam Speaker, I think we all want to know whether the minister is in favour of STOL transport, because his seatmate, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, certainly is supporting research into STOL at de Havilland with the Dash-7 and other planes like it. We would like to know where the minister stands on this. If the minister is in favour of STOL, will he use his best efforts to change the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission to enable Canadians generally to take advantage of pretty excellent technology produced in Canada and demonstrate to people throughout the world that Canadian air technology is first class, so that we have some method of selling and exhibiting it?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, the decision of the CTC was a rather intriguing one, as my hon. friend knows. The decision was a favourable one but "not a strong one". So my own support for the project depends, in good part, on what extent the project will be demonstrated to be a viable one. That is why I indicated a moment ago that I would be in touch with others interested in the same project to see what extent of enthusiasm and money they would allocate to it.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE OF SECURITY GUARDS BEHIND CURTAINS IN CHAMBER

Madam Speaker: I wish to advise hon. members that I have received from the Sergeant-at-Arms a report relating to the presence of members of the protective staff behind the curtains during the sitting of the House on Thursday, October 23, 1980, just prior to the vote.

When it became apparent that the Chair was having certain difficulties in putting the question on that occasion, normal precautionary measures were taken. Members of the protective staff placed themselves in the opposition lobby to be available should the Sergeant-at-Arms require their assistance. The guards moved behind the curtains when it became impossible for them to hear the Speaker or to observe proceedings from the lobby, and they left as soon as the vote was called.

While I am satisfied that the actions of the security guards on that occasion were taken in good faith, in understanding of their duty, and the past practice of the protective service, I have asked the Sergeant-at-Arms to review the procedures to find the most appropriate way in which the protective staff could discharge their important responsibilities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, under the condition that you will cause and bring forward such a report out of your office as Speaker of this House, I am prepared to withdraw my question of privilege on this subject.

Privilege—Mr. Clark

PRIVILEGE

MR. CLARK—STATEMENTS MADE IN SENATE BY GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, yesterday I gave notice orally, and again this morning in writing, of a question of privilege which I believe affects the rights of members of the House. I argued a large part of that question yesterday and will not impose upon the time of the House to repeat those arguments, except I want to draw the attention of the Chair, in coming to its decision, to page 4460 of *Hansard*. In replying to questions from myself and the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty), the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) said:

Anyhow I do not intend to comment on what Senator Perrault said in the other place. If he has a question to put in the Senate, he has colleagues there who could do it.

He was referring to me, my colleagues, or any member of this House of Commons. Clearly the purport of it was that the President of the Privy Council did not intend to answer questions relating to government policy in this House which were raised as a consequence of statements made by his colleague in cabinet, the government leader in the other place.

I think the House has a very clear right to know if a new policy is being put forward here by the President of the Privy Council. The general policy followed—and indeed a policy repeated again today by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) in replying to a question relating to the Wheat Board—has been that there will be ministers in this House who are prepared to answer to members in this House relating to questions of public policy. That practice is distinctly different from the policy outlined by the President of the Privy Council when he said that if we had questions to put to ministers who serve in the other place, then we should be denied the right as members of Parliament to put them here and, indeed, should pass those questions off to senators or members of the other place.

We have a right to know whether a new policy is being put forward here. Will ministers of the government sitting in the House of Commons be refusing to clarify statements of ministers in the other place, as the President of the Privy Council has now done on two occasions? Will they pretend that they are ignorant of any policy stated on behalf of the Government of Canada by ministers who sit in the other place? Will we now have to arrange, as elected members of the House of Commons, to have questions put by appointed Senators to ministers of the Crown that cannot be put by elected members of the House of Commons to ministers of the Crown? Obviously it would not be an acceptable procedure for us.

Recently, and this was what gave rise to this question, the government House leader in the other place, when asked a question about the possibility of extending the reporting date of the joint committee on the constitution, said the following:

—it is conceivable that the committee may say, "Because of the vast public interest in the work of the committee, we recommend to both the Senate and the Commons that we be given an additional period of time in which to hear other witnesses from across the country."