

Order Paper Questions

of members who have placed questions on the order paper. I mentioned certain specific ones of my own. Some of us are like voices crying in the wilderness when we rise day after day asking why these things go on. This government sits here, ministers joy-riding around the country on government aircraft, and will not tell us how much they are paying from government funds. That is another set of questions that I have. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) apparently thought he made a fatal error in answering one of my questions by stating that he had spent three quarters of a million dollars on his own behalf. Why can we not know what all the other ministers have spent of taxpayers' funds, riding around on government aircraft such as Jetstars?

I placed another question on the order paper with regard to the Minister of Transport. I can get its number, if the parliamentary secretary wants me to look it up. Last November, over "Cross-Country Check Up", the Minister of Transport was asked by a telephone caller why shortly after his arrival on a Jetstar at Saskatoon airport another Jetstar arrived with five female passengers. The caller asked who were they and what they were doing on a government aircraft. The minister undertook, over CBC radio, to tell that listener that he would investigate, find out and give that as soon as possible. That was last November. It is now June. That is not "as soon as possible".

I also have a similar question on the order paper as to why private individuals should be tooting around the country on government aircraft. Who are they? Who gave them permission? What were they doing? The Minister of Transport sits idle, says and does nothing, as do most other ministers on the front benches. I know that one cabinet minister prepared an answer with regard to his personal travel and handed it in. It is being held up because other ministers refuse to prepare theirs. This is a disgrace.

I have no more to say other than I fully support the point raised by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants, seconded by the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). It is time this House was turned into what it should be—a place where the people of Canada can get information and where this government can no longer conduct a farce instead of a government.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief on this. I seconded this motion because I agree entirely with it. The part that puzzles me is why the questions are left unanswered. For example, on February 8 I asked question No. 1772. It asked for the names and addresses of all lawyers and law firms in the constituency of Victoria who performed services during 1975 and 1976 for the Canadian Radio-Television Commission and, in each case, what was the total amount paid to them. I had on the order paper 15 or 20 similar questions dealing with Crown agencies. Every other one has been answered. It makes me suspicious that something funny has been going on with the CRTC in that area. Surely, it is just as easy to get an answer from the CRTC as from any other agency of government. The government was able to answer all the others, and to do so in prompt fashion.

[Mr. Cossitt.]

I have another question, No. 1915, which should have gone to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson). It was asked over four months ago. It is a very simple question. The minister announced in one of his press releases that he would be making certain changes with regard to the closing of bases. He said they were going to dispose of 1107 Avenue Road, Toronto. My question was:

What is the target date for closing or disposing of 1107 Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario?

Four months later there is still no answer. I would even accept the answer that they do not know, or that they do not have a target date. However, for the question to be left on the order paper as if it were of no consequence is certainly not satisfactory to me. I am forced to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that this government is too incompetent to be mendacious in an orderly fashion.

● (1610)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Now that we are having this little session of raising points with respect to questions, I suggest that some very important questions remain unanswered. I cannot understand why. I have one particular example, a question I asked, which has been on the order paper since October 13, seeking information relating to our penal system and inmates in Canada with respect to indefinite sentences, dangerous sexual offenders, habitual offenders, and the number on parole. This can hardly be considered as political; it involves factual information which the government should have at its disposal.

Many people are interested in statistics of this kind. I would not object to a reasonable period of time elapsing before questions are answered, but this question cries out for an answer and I ask the parliamentary secretary to use his good offices to see that it is answered without further delay. The number is 487.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are departing from the original argument, which is part of the cause for the procedural difficulty we are in. The original motion was under the heading of privilege by the member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave). I am sure he will realize, along with the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) who seconded the motion, and the other hon. members who supported it, that the comments of the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) were accurate when he said in the course of his contribution that of course there is no legal or technical obligation, under the rules—or whatever the language was—and no specific obligation on the ministry to give answers under our rules, as is well known; but there is a moral obligation.

That was the basis of the argument put forward by the hon. member for Leeds. That may be so, and that has been the subject of discussion today. It is the subject of discussion almost every day when questions are answered. But each day when questions are answered, of course, a number of questions are not answered. They become the subject of attention and discussion each day the parliamentary secretary does that.