

Supply

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier).

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order because we seem to be having a problem. We have two kinds of questions, those that appear in the *Monthly Supplement to the Order Paper*, which used to appear on the Order Paper before the new rules came into effect, and those asked under Standing Order 64(3), which require an answer by the Government within 45 days.

My point of order concerns the fact that I have a question dated May 31, 1985, one year ago, which deals with public service pensions. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have raised this question several times in the House. Why does the Government not answer? I do not know. I was told that I would have a comprehensive answer within a few days or a few weeks to this question on pensions and that the facts would be laid before the House.

We ask questions to obtain figures, facts and answers so that we shall know where we are going. If the Government does not want to reply to the questions which do not come under Standing Order 64(3), it should say so. We could then refuse to maintain these questions and simply transfer them to the new category which requires an answer from the Government within 45 days. I would like the Government to examine this matter seriously to avoid a waste of time, and if the Government wants us to cancel the questions asked before the new rules came into force, we shall do so because the Government has refused in the past to let questions remain unanswered. It is as simple as that!

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to put on the record that in this Thirty-third Parliament we have answered 83.8 per cent of the questions compared to the previous administration, of which the Hon. Member was a Member, which only answered 73 per cent of the questions.

Having dealt with how many questions are being answered, the Hon. Member should know that if he wishes to receive an answer to his question within 45 days, he need only, as I understand it under the new rules, request an answer within 45 days. If the Hon. Member goes through that process I am sure he will see that, since all of the questions to which a request has been made have been answered within 45 days, he will receive his answer.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, subject to that suggestion, I will then move that No. 386 be moved to the new order of answering questions and that it be answered within 45 days.

Mr. Lewis: You can't do that.

Mr. Gauthier: The Parliamentary Secretary is saying that I cannot do that now. Make up your mind. I have been waiting

for a year and the Government is not answering. The Parliamentary Secretary just told me I could, if I wanted, transfer it for answer within 45 days. I am requesting that.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The Speaker will tell you how to do it.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, it was my impression it had to be requested in writing. I am sure if the Hon. Member requests it in writing, he will get his answer.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: According to the Standing Orders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Shall all the remaining questions stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 82—NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East) moved:

That this House urge the Government to adopt a national housing strategy that incorporates a definition of "core need" that will include all Canadian families living below the poverty line as defined by the National Council of Welfare.

She said: Mr. Speaker, first I might say that I am pleased that we in the House have a chance today to focus on the issue of the desperate housing problem facing more than a million Canadians and, in particular, the very specific and difficult problem of what constitutes a "core need". Few other issues influence Canadians so much as the issue of housing. It is actually one of our basic needs.

If we are housed and fed, at least we have a chance to get out and look for a job, but if we have no housing, if we find ourselves among the tens of thousands of Canada's homeless, we do not even have a base of operation or starting point.

Today's debate will allow us to discuss a number of issues including the cuts in funding to federal housing and housing related programs, in particular, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, the elimination, for example, of the Canadian Insulation Program and the termination of the Registered Home Ownership Program. There have been a number of cuts initiated by the Conservative Government.

If we look at the numbers, comparing the expenditures in the area of housing between 1984 and 1985, the picture is not bright for the more than one million Canadians defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as being Canadians who live in inadequate and insufficient housing. In 1984, public housing loans amounted to \$2.4 million of the CMHC housing budget. In 1985 it was \$5.7 million, a cut of almost \$2 million. The federal contribution to federal-provincial housing was \$128 million in 1984. In 1985 it was \$77 million.