

of Transport, and the hon. member for York South-Weston (Mrs. Appolloni), who is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Traditionally, we have used Standing Order 43 to bring to the attention of the House matters of urgent and pressing necessity. The rule on this side, Madam Speaker, is to give Standing Order 43 motions to as many non-front bench, non-ex-cabinet ministers as possible. We occasionally break that rule, such as last week when the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) presented the very important report on VIA Rail. It gives our members an opportunity to bring matters forward which they might not do during question period.

We have worked very hard to shorten the length of preambles under Standing Order 43. Today we had nine. Occasionally we get the odd humorous motion to give a little balance.

I would draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to page 134 of *Beauchesne* under the heading "Questions by Parliamentary Secretaries", where it states:

Those such as parliamentary secretaries who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the government ought not to use the time of the question period for the privilege of asking questions of the government.

I would suggest that motions under Standing Order 43 is also a time in which it is a matter of privilege. We feel very strongly that that privilege should be reserved for backbenchers. That may not be the feeling among hon. members opposite.

● (1510)

We realize that there are occasions when there is a death of a head of state and when a frontbencher, a cabinet minister or, indeed, the Prime Minister may wish to bring forward a motion under Standing Order 43. This has been brought to Your Honour's attention in the House before. We do not object to motions under Standing Order 43 of a local nature which a member on the government side can legitimately bring forward. We do object to lengthy, self-serving motions under Standing Order 43 moved by parliamentary secretaries which are meant only to advertise the government.

If there is a legitimate reason for proposing a motion, there is no objection from this side; but I point out with respect that, as recorded in *Hansard* for December 1, 1980, Your Honour undertook to look into this practice. On a day when two parliamentary secretaries have proposed two motions under Standing Order 43 of a self-serving nature, I ask Your Honour to look at that practice and give us a ruling.

**Madam Speaker:** I think I can give the hon. member a ruling on this matter. It is up to the parties to determine whether they prefer to allow backbenchers or frontbenchers to propose motions under Standing Order 43. I recognize hon. members when they rise. I do not make much distinction whether they are backbenchers or frontbenchers. If they rise, they are entitled to be recognized, if there is time, and that is the practice I follow.

*Point of Order—Miss MacDonald*

I think the hon. member was confusing the asking of questions with motions under Standing Order 43. I believe my predecessor ruled that parliamentary secretaries may not ask questions during question period, but Standing Order 15(2) says very clearly that members other than ministers of the Crown may propose motions pursuant to Standing Order 43. Members other than cabinet ministers include parliamentary secretaries. It has been the custom in this House to allow parliamentary secretaries to bring matters forward under the provisions of Standing Order 43. I agree with the hon. member that the shorter these motions the easier it is for the Speaker to fit in everyone who wants to put motions under the provisions of Standing Order 43. This, by the way, also applies to questions in the course of the question period.

I am sorry, but I will take this opportunity to say that I feel that the matter is really getting quite out of control. Questions are certainly too long, and I might say that of certain answers. But when questions are long, hon. members cannot expect the Speaker to interrupt the answers too quickly because there is a certain logic to the proposition that sometimes answers need to be a bit longer than the questions, although not all the time. If the hon. member wants to restrict the putting of motions under the provisions of Standing Order 43 only to Members of Parliament who are not parliamentary secretaries, I am afraid he will have to have the Standing Orders changed because, as I read them, parliamentary secretaries are allowed, and have traditionally been allowed, to put motions under the provisions of Standing Order 43.

**Mr. Lewis:** Madam Speaker, with respect and without in any way questioning your ruling, you did get into the subject of the question period, and I point out that since this House resumed on October 14, 61 per cent of the questions asked by government backbenchers have been self-serving and not "back home" type questions. If that point is to be made, I think it should be made to members of this House on the government side because that is where the questions are coming from. Last Friday there were three of them.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I commented on the length of questions and not on the suggestion that they are self-serving. The Speaker has no opinion on the substance of questions.

Incidentally, I want to correct myself. When the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) presented his motion today under Standing Order 43, I referred to motions being serious. I should have said that there is a certain form which we are accustomed to following under the provisions of Standing Order 43. When I said "serious", I was in a way passing judgment on the nature of the motion, and I should not have done that. However, I think the hon. member understood that I was referring to form.

MISS MACDONALD—CUTBACKS IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCING

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order as a result of the words today of the Secretary of State (Mr. Regan), who has since