

Order for Return

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): What we need here is not only the FBI and the CIA—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I just wish to assure hon. members that I will look into the matters they have raised. I also wish to inform the House that a total of 87 per cent of all questions which have appeared on the order paper have been answered as of today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: The quality of the answers counts, too. We are objecting to the quality.

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): On a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If the hon. member for Scarborough East will be patient the Chair will recognize him in due course. Hon. members will note that we have been sitting for 30 minutes and have had a number of points of order and questions of privilege. I would hope we would try to straighten out these difficulties and get on with the business of the House. The Chair, of course, will hear the hon. member and others, I gather, who have points of order or questions of privilege.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege arises from the attempt at an answer made by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River who seems to have a greater vocabulary than the word "no". What has 87 per cent of the questions being answered to do with the removal of my question from the order paper? The hon. member seems to take it on himself to apologize for the government. If it comes to a choice, he is the last I would pick from that side of the House to give an answer to anything.

Mr. Nielsen: I should like to speak, if I may, Mr. Speaker, to the serious and important question raised by my hon. friend from Cape Breton-East Richmond. The House of Commons is an institution within which the government is supposed to account to the people of Canada. One of the reasons we place written questions on the order paper is to obtain such an accounting from the government. My hon. friend put down a series of questions numbering a dozen or so directed to the operations of a corporation coming under the jurisdiction of the government, and the government has made no attempt at all to answer those questions.

The hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River rose to say that the government had answered 87 per cent of the questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: If the kind of answer my hon. friend received is any indication of the quality of that 87 per cent, then the answers given fall far short of recognizing the principle of accountability to which I have referred.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond).]

Mr. Nielsen: Surely the government can make a more serious effort not only to answer the questions which are put to them in a specific way, as did my hon. friend, but to answer them within a reasonable time and not carry them over for months and months. If this were done, members could get answers to their questions and the government could perhaps convey some semblance of an image in terms of accountability to the House.

Mr. Stackhouse: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the parliamentary secretary informing the House that answers have been given to 87 per cent of the questions asked, but I say to him we should be equally concerned about the 13 per cent that have not been answered, many of which, I suspect, involve information which the government is covering up.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would hope that when written questions are called we would not become involved in a debate about statistics as to the number of questions answered and remaining unanswered. I feel that legitimate points of order can be raised by some members who believe their questions have remained unanswered for too long, but I think that to go further is to invite fruitless debate at this point. If there is a claim that a large proportion of the questions have been answered and if, in response, there is an equally legitimate claim that a number of questions remain unanswered, I suggest that this is a subject for debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to bring out statistics on answers or non-answers to our questions. One thing is certain, they are slow to answer the questions listed on the order paper.

Mr. Speaker, I can very well understand the complaints of the Progressive Conservatives, but I will say that when they were in power, answers were no quicker than they are today.

• (1440)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

[*English*]

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call notice of motion No. 227.

FORMULAS OF HAIR SPRAYS SOLD IN CANADA AVAILABLE TO HEALTH PROTECTION BRANCH

Motion No. 227—**Mr. Marshall:**

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the formulas of hair sprays being sold in Canada and available to the Health Protection Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare.

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, this motion is not acceptable to the government in that the material requested was submitted in confidence, and consent to