

received a reply. Therefore, I am not in a position to advise the hon. member whether there is an inconsistency in the reply which he received to his question on the order paper.

Mr. Epp: I told you there was.

Mr. Blais: That is the hon. member's interpretation. I would like to look at the two documents and provide the hon. member with a reply. Of course, I would insist that there has not been any intention to provide wrongful information. If there is a difference in the two documents it might be because of the time when the two replies were made. However, Mr. Speaker, I would want to have some time to review the matter and then to deal with it fully. In view of the fact that it has been raised in the House, I will be replying and making the corrections which will be compellable before this House.

MR. HNATYSHYN—DELAY IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS NOS. 207
AND 208

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I would like to raise a point of order at this point. Up to this date, I have not complained about the particular questions which were placed on the order paper during the first week of this particular session. I believe now that it is most appropriate for me to stand up and in a most serious way address my remarks to the parliamentary secretary and ask him if he will now pay attention to two particular questions and at the earliest possible date obtain the answers to them.

These questions are very important in terms of government expenditures and the use by members of the cabinet of publicly paid and publicly financed equipment belonging to the government. The questions are also important in terms of whether or not certain equipment belonging to the people of Canada and the government has been used for political activities. I refer specifically, for the parliamentary secretary's benefit, to questions Nos. 207 and 208 which stand in my name.

One question asks whether the Liberal Party of Canada has paid for the use of any government aircraft in the period August 16 to October 16, 1978, in connection with the by-elections held on October 16, 1978, and, if so, what is the amount for each trip. I know that this information is available from the Department of Transport and that it can very easily be ascertained.

The second question asks whether or not the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or members of the cabinet during the period August 16 to October 16, 1978, made use of government aircraft and, if so, what was the total cost and what was the destination on each occasion. Again, a simple request of factual information which is on the records of the Department of Transport and which is easily obtained.

I think that it is in the interest of the government to have this information brought forward immediately. If there had been a simple answer, that the aircraft had not been used during the course of the political campaign, I would expect that it would be very simple to write a nil reply. I have to draw the conclusion that equipment was used during the course of

Point of Order—Mr. Hnatyshyn

this political campaign by government members, who have an advantage in terms of political activity in this country, having available to them JetStars and government aircraft of various descriptions to bring them to various constituencies in the course of an election campaign.

It is very important that the record be made clear and that the government not hide this matter until this parliament is dissolved, unless it wants to be accused of keeping this matter under confidential cover-up. If they are hiding information which the people of Canada are entitled to see they will know what kind of morality exists in this particular government.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the member believes that Canadians take him seriously when he says he wants to act in the interest of the government. I am also convinced that he is serious when he says that his questions are important. However, there are about 700 questions on the order paper and all members believe that their questions are important, Mr. Speaker. If you would allow me, I would say that on February 14, less than six days ago, the official statistics were as follows. Answers had been provided to 434 of 1,137 questions, which means an average of 37.2 per cent. Therefore, this is a satisfactory average compared with other averages at this time of a session during recent years. I am asking the hon. member to be patient. He has been well looked after by parliament in the past and we will continue to do so. He knows quite well that the government has never attempted to hide anything to members opposite, especially when the information is available.

[English]

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I am very interested in the parliamentary secretary's reply, because as a former minister of transport I know how these accounts are kept. These accounts are kept on a daily basis in the Department of Transport. If an aircraft is used by anybody, the hours and the expenditures for salaries, fuel and so on are kept on a daily basis and can be obtained very rapidly and very easily.

There is absolutely no excuse for holding up an answer of this kind longer than one week at the outside. I know what I am talking about because I was in this job for three and a half years, and we answered many questions of this kind. Those questions should have been answered a long time ago, and it will be a disgrace on this government if they are not answered immediately. There is absolutely no excuse for not giving out information which is available today.

● (1540)

MR. ORLIKOW—DELAY IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): On the same question, Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to hear the Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) urge the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) to