

and half a year later the minister resigned from the cabinet. We end up with this situation where the parliamentary secretary tables an answer in which he says that he is not going to give me the information because the minister has resigned. He does not feel that he has any obligation to give the House information about the way in which the funds of the taxpayers have been used.

As I said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, you cannot compel the parliamentary secretary to give adequate answers to questions on the order paper, but surely members of this House, under its procedures, in trying to discharge their responsibilities as parliamentarians and to ensure that the taxpayers' money is properly used, have rights too.

An hon. Member: You are only politicking; you don't mean it.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite laughs when I mention the rights of members of this House.

I feel that I have been poorly treated by the parliamentary secretary. It is a sign that he has acted in either bad faith or simply has not been responsible in discharging his duties. I hope that the House will look at this matter and come up with a means to ensure that when members ask questions in good faith they will get full and complete answers and will be treated in good faith by members on the other side.

● (1612)

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on a point of order with respect to answers that have been forthcoming. This is a special occasion for me. I have received my first answer in this session, and so I wanted to mark this by bringing to your attention, a grievance which I feel I have respecting the whole process of answering questions.

As you know, the purpose of putting question on the order paper are twofold. First they are not necessarily matters of urgent and pressing necessity which would be allowed within the context of question period. Secondly, detailed information is sometimes required that is not appropriate for question period. We have a device now of having written questions on the order paper, in order to obtain information from the government on matters that are of some considerable importance to each member, who puts these questions on the order paper. This applies not only to members on the opposition side, but indeed to members on the government side as well.

What we have is the example that is being set by this parliamentary secretary. I am sure he is merely the conduit for each department to give answers as they deem appropriate. I have observed the list that we have been getting during the course of this session. Most times it contains something like three replies, occasionally more, but three answers each time there is an opportunity for the parliamentary secretary to rise and table answers given to these written questions.

On the basis that, as individual members of parliament, we are using this device in a responsible manner to allow depart-

ments to answer questions not in an indefinite period of time but within a reasonable time, under this point of order I would like to raise with the parliamentary secretary the question as to whether there are any guidelines handed down to departments concerning the time limit within which it is expected these questions will be answered. I can give examples of my own questions where it would be almost possible to have a yes or a no answer. Yet I have been in a position of waiting. In some cases I could give examples of questions which were put on the order paper in previous sessions that went unanswered, and I have replaced them on the order paper because I am still interested in finding out what the policy is with regard to areas important to myself and my constituents.

If there is to be any semblance of order and we are to have any credibility in this government—whether it wants to answer these questions or just play games with us—I would like to know if there are any guidelines the parliamentary secretary gives to departments to suggest that within a certain period of time it would be reasonable to expect answers to these questions, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Some of my colleagues have asked on previous occasions, I think in all seriousness, whether the parliamentary secretary would tell us what questions the government does not intend to answer, and if in fact that is its intention, then let us know about it. However, will the parliamentary secretary inform us if there are any guidelines at all given to departments concerning time limits in which it is expected they will, in the normal course of activities, answer?

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the excellent point of order put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Beatty), and to support him with my own particular grievance. This concerns question No. 232 on the order paper. It has been on the current order paper now since October 17. That question, sir, is really a very simple one. It has to do with a detailed account of the spending of money under the Federal Labour Intensive Program and, more particularly, how many jobs were created under that program, and by department.

That question was placed on the order paper in the last session. It was one of the 20 per cent of those questions which the parliamentary secretary was unable to answer because he was unable to obtain answers from the various government departments to whom the questions were directed. However, this question deals with an expenditure of \$100 million voted by this parliament. This expenditure was undertaken by this government under a program late last winter, a program known as the Federal Labour Intensive Program, the purpose of which was to be a part of the government's over-all attack on the very troublesome and serious unemployment problem facing the country.

As we get into this winter, and as the present serious unemployment situation becomes even more aggravated by winter conditions and the traditional seasonal factors that are at work, we will be called upon, I have no doubt, to provide more funding for the Federal Labour Intensive Program.