

foreign ministers, \$4,824; (vi) Travel, No cost; (vii) Displays, audio-visuals, etc., \$12,040; Rental of electronic equipment and installation, \$8,456; Mirabel/Montreal bus service, \$8,980.

2. 2,500 official guests and approximately 500 media representatives.

INDEPENDENT TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENT INQUIRY BOARD

Question No. 2,299—Mr. Forrestall:

Does the government intend to introduce legislation similar in principle to that proposed in Bill C-226, the subject-matter of which now stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communication, to create an independent transportation accident inquiry board as promised in the most recent Speech from the Throne and (a) if so, on what date (b) if not, for what reason?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): The government does intend to introduce legislation to create an independent accident investigation board but the subject matter may be somewhat broader in scope than that proposed in Bill C-226.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Do the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the question period I indicated to the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) that I would raise a point of order concerning question No. 3,081 which I placed on the order paper earlier this year. For some time I have criticized the practice of the Department of Supply and Services in not giving research and development contracts to the lowest bidder. These are awarded without tender. Accordingly, I put question No. 3,081 on the order paper to try to elicit further information about this particular practice. While I was at the United Nations last Wednesday, my question was called by the parliamentary secretary and it was ostensibly answered. *Hansard* for last Wednesday records that the answer given by the Minister of Supply and Services was as follows:

● (1510)

The question requires considerable research and the information will be communicated to the hon. member at a later date.

I am at a loss to understand the procedure that was followed. Obviously, the minister had no answer to give. I was astonished to discover that, following the non-answer by the minister, my question was dropped from the order paper. Apparently it is the government's intention, at some time convenient to it, privately to communicate information to me that I specifically asked, in the form of a question on the order paper, to be answered publicly and formally.

This is a very important matter. It is a totally unacceptable and quite improper procedure for the government to evade answering questions on the order paper by saying they will communicate the information to an hon. member privately at a later date. If I were to repeat the question and re-enter it on the order paper—and I am not sure whether that is procedurally acceptable—I would lose the

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priority I had, despite the fact it has been on the order paper for a couple of months. I therefore ask that my question be reinstated with its previous priority as question No. 3,081, and that the answer given by the minister last Wednesday, which was no answer at all, be disregarded.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not know if other hon. members have a contribution to make on the point of order. It is a fascinating point. The Chair will consider it and make a ruling, probably tomorrow.

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek clarification from the Chair on a matter which concerns all of us with respect to second reading of a bill. Since the changes in the rules and the increased importance of committees, and so on, the meaning of second reading seems to have changed from its traditional meaning. I, and I am sure all other members, would like some clarification from the Chair on this point.

We have always considered that to vote for second reading was to give approval in principle to a bill. At the same time, when the bill arrives in committee we are in a position to propose amendments, and when the bill returns to the House at report stage we may also propose amendments. If one votes in favour of the principle of a bill, approving it in principle at second reading, he could hardly propose amendments at a later stage. On the other hand, if it is not a question of approval in principle but merely to vote in favour of sending the bill to committee, it seems that we require clarification on this point.

We shall have before us today Bill C-58 which is a case in point. Many members of this House agree with the bill in principle but would like to change it somewhat by amending it; they cannot accept the bill in its present form. Are they voting on second reading to send it to committee, or will their vote on second reading be, in effect, acceptance or approval of the bill? Not only with respect to this bill, but with respect to other bills which will come before us, members should know once and for all whether, if they vote on second reading in favour of a bill, they are giving it approval in principle or simply voting to send it to committee where it can be amended.

Mr. Speaker: Without considerable and extensive debate which probably should be initiated in our procedure committee, I do not want to decide the direct question put forward by the hon. member as to whether the traditional vote, certainly as it was known before the revamping of our procedures through the 1969 amendments, on second reading giving approval in principle does or does not stand. With due respect, the question is academic.

It is absolutely clear that the vote on second reading does not in any way circumscribe the ability of any member of the House of Commons to propose to vote for, discuss or vote against amendments put forward at the committee stage or at the report stage. Whether or not that vote is taken to be a vote in favour of the principle of the bill, the fact is there is no restriction on the power of members who have voted either for or against a second reading motion to propose or in any way to support amendments put forward at committee stage. That, I am sure, is absolutely clear.