

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Later:]

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State. Was the minister stating government policy when he said in London, Ontario, that the press no longer has much importance except to himself and other members of the upper middle class?

Hon. Gerard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Of course I said no such thing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question cannot be asked of the minister.

[Later:]

Mr. Schreyer: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is that you allowed the Secretary of State to answer the question—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I did not allow it. I believe the Secretary of State got up a little too quickly. I suggested that the question should not be asked. Perhaps I should have moved a little faster, but perhaps after 40 minutes of questioning the Speaker does not move as quickly at the end as he does at the beginning.

AIR CANADA**STRIKE OF MECHANICS—AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRAVEL**

Mr. Jack McIntosh (Swift Current-Maple Creek): My question is supplementary to that asked the Minister of Labour with regard to the Air Canada strike. Will the minister elaborate on his statement that alternative modes of transportation are available? Does the minister mean between Montreal and Ottawa or between western Canada and eastern Canada? If he means the latter, I wish he would get up to date information.

Hon. Bryce S. Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would not want to leave the impression that the strike is not inconvenient. It is certainly more inconvenient in some parts of the country than in others. I say there are two major railways running across the country as well as Canadian Pacific Airlines, Transair, Nordair, Royaleire and I believe other charter airlines. They are doing the best possible to take up the slack caused by this particular strike. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, this is a dispute between Air Canada and a certain group of key employees. It is not the time for the government to be stampeded into reactionary statements or action.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. McIntosh: A further supplementary to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Possibly the minister is not aware that when you try to get reservations in any of the modes he suggested, the best they can guarantee right now on travelling from western to eastern Canada is May 7. I ask the minister if he will prevail on the existing railways, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, to make available additional rolling stock to facilitate the demands that are prominent right now in western Canada, so that innocent people will not suffer?

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ISSUING OF PASSPORTS FOR EXTENDED PERIOD**

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the crisis in the passport department, will the minister give consideration to reissuing passports for an additional five years, rather than issuing new passports, as a solution to a problem which seems to be out of hand at the present time?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker. I do not think that would be a wise thing to do. I believe we should continue as we have been doing to increase the security underlying Canadian passports. These are very valuable documents, and it was not doing Canada's reputation any good to have them issued as loosely as in the past.

THE MINISTRY**INQUIRY CONCERNING NEW MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Prime Minister has now had an opportunity over the weekend to consider the events of late last week flowing from the resignation of the minister, and having read the many speeches resulting therefrom, is he now giving some consideration to the setting up of a separate ministry of housing and urban development?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Well, Mr. Speaker, the many speeches I heard were mainly concerned with constitutional problems. I do not remember reading any that suggested that this kind of department would increase the constitutional power of the government.