

● (1200)

QUALITY AND DELIVERY OF SERVICE

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister's own employees are telling him and the Government through this unprecedented petition that the service to the public is being jeopardized, will he immediately order an independent investigation to develop standards to ensure that an adequate quality of service to all Canadians will be re-established and that an appropriate and sufficient number of staff members will be employed in order to deliver the quality of service that all Canadians rightfully expect and demand?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of State (Immigration)): Mr. Speaker, the down-sizing is being achieved with the utmost consideration for employees and client service. I do not need my hon. friend to tell me about the need to improve, or anything about quality of service. He may not be aware of this, but for the last year we have had in place a program to improve quality of service and I can say that we have made dramatic strides in improvement right across the country. Our offices are more accommodating and our officers are more accessible and are giving services that clients want, need, and understand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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POINT OF ORDER

ALLEGED STONEWALLING BY COMMITTEE

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier this day, the leader of the socialist party, during Question Period, alleged that the standing committee on the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion stonewalled the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) when he sought information on the Department at yesterday's Standing Committee meeting. I simply want to ensure that the facts are straight. An allegation is one thing; the truth is another.

The fact is that the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville is not a regular member of that Standing Committee. He was parachuted in yesterday, as was the Hon. Member for Saint-Maurice (Mr. Grondin), but at least the Hon. Member for Saint-Maurice had the courtesy to indicate that he was not a regular member and therefore was not fully conversant with matters before that Standing Committee.

The standing committee on DRIE has for several months been examining matters relating to tourism and matters relating to the IRDP program. The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville endeavoured yesterday to take us right off that agenda by going after senior staff members from the Ministry who were present to respond to the mandate laid down by the Standing Committee and not to policy questions asked by the

Point of Order—Mr. Brisco

Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville. In other words, the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville sought to divert the business of the Standing Committee which it had been addressing assiduously and vigorously week after week, month after month.

I want that allegation altered, amended and withdrawn by the leader of the socialist Party.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to the member of the capitalist Party across the way. He has referred to me as being parachuted into a particular committee. I suggest that if you were to check with the Clerk of that committee, Madam Speaker, you would find that I am a bona fide member of the committee. I was there with the proper papers containing the signature of the Whip and I was not parachuted in.

Second, if you would check the records of yesterday, Madam Speaker, you would find that the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) suggested, when I asked him about this issue, that I go to the committee to ask my questions. He was not opposed to me doing that and I tried to do that but was stonewalled.

I say I was stonewalled because the witness at the committee yesterday, Mr. Salley, is a Deputy Minister of the Department in charge of policy and one important policy is how one's books and accounts are administered.

In addition to that, as my friend from Kootenay has said, there were people present at the committee yesterday who were responsible for the Industrial Regional Development Program, the major ticket item in DRIE. I asked questions about over-commitment possibilities within IRDP. Those questions were ruled in order by my friend from Cape Breton, the Chairman of that particular committee.

I would suggest with respect that on both counts my friend from Kootenay is strictly out of order. He is only crying sour grapes because the Minister has bungled through an over-commitment in that Department which is without precedent in the history of Canada.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Madam Speaker, I am also a member of the DRIE committee and my colleague from Saint-Maurice (Mr. Grondin) was there on my behalf yesterday because I could not make yesterday's meeting.

I need to say as a full-time member of that committee that Members of Parliament, be they Members who come in occasionally or regularly, have every right and privilege to design their own questions when they appear before a committee. I would suggest to my hon. colleague who I normally find to be a reasonable member of the Conservative caucus and the committee that it is not good enough, it takes all the nerve of a toothache, to suggest that the majority of Conservative members on the committee can dictate and in fact can sanction one way or the other the questions that are allowed to be asked.