

*Point of Order—Mr. Beatty*

since the end of the question period. My point of order is with regard to the answers given to questions on the order paper.

I feel that it is a fundamental question and that my rights as a member of parliament are affected by the procedures we are following here, as well as the ability of all members of parliament to discharge their responsibilities. I acknowledge that you, sir, have stated on many occasions that it is not your responsibility to ensure that answers given to questions on the order paper, or answers to questions asked during the oral question period, are adequate and full, that your responsibility is merely to ensure that the rules are kept. I certainly accept your statement in that regard.

However, I think it may be useful to you, sir, and to the House, if I explain the difficulty that these procedures have put us in at the present time and which leads to a situation where the rules make a mockery of the ability of an individual member of parliament to get information from the government if the government is determined to frustrate his attempts to do so. I would like to bring to your attention the answer I received on November 7 to question No. 67, which I placed on the order paper on October 11.

You will recall, sir, that over the course of the past several months I have risen at this point in the proceedings several times to bring to the parliamentary secretary's attention the question which I had on the order paper relating to the use of government aircraft by the then minister of labour to fly to western Canada to consult with various owners of CFL teams to prevent the takeover by Mr. Harold Ballard of the Hamilton Tiger Cats. The first part of my question was to elicit from the parliamentary secretary whether in fact the trip had taken place at government expense and, if so, what were the costs to the taxpayers, who the other individuals were who accompanied the minister, and how these activities related to the official responsibilities of the minister of labour because, surely, if he is to commandeer government aircraft, it must be in line with his official responsibilities.

The second part of my question was to ask whether the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) intended to follow up on a suggestion made by the then minister of labour to the extent that the Minister of Agriculture would find money to cover the cost of increasing the seating capacity at Ivor Wynne Stadium.

These questions were first placed on the order paper on February 22, 1978. At that time they were listed as question No. 1,332. I allowed several months to elapse before first bringing the question to the attention of the parliamentary secretary because I felt, even though this was a matter which would be answered in short order, that the government was entitled to a reasonable period of time. The first time I rose in the House to bring it to the attention of the parliamentary secretary was in June, 1978, at which time I asked him, after mentioning the substance of the question, why it had sat on the order paper for several months without receiving an answer. The response I received from the parliamentary secretary, as reported at page 6832 of *Hansard* reads:

[Mr. Beatty.]

Mr. Speaker, the number of the question is all I need. I am quite capable of reading the order paper. I can assure the hon. member that we will give his question all the attention it requires within the next few weeks.

At the time I thought the parliamentary secretary was acting in good faith, and allowed the matter to drop. I assumed that he would discharge his responsibilities and provide me with an answer to this very straightforward question.

The House then adjourned for the summer, and the question was left standing on the order paper for three months while the House was in recess. During that period, of course, no further questions could be added to the order paper and therefore the government had three months to come to grips with the various questions left on the order paper and to prepare answers for when parliament resumed for the last day of the old session. When parliament resumed there was no answer given to that question and it died on the order paper.

Although I raised the matter in the form of a point of order at that time, the parliamentary secretary then assured me that he had made every effort to get an answer but had not been able to do so. I subsequently raised the question a couple more times, and in all it has been five times in eight and one half months that I brought to the parliamentary secretary's attention the fact that this question was outstanding. On June 29, October 17, and October 24 I referred specifically to this question, and on November 1 and October 10 I referred in general terms to a number of questions still outstanding which I had on the order paper.

On November 1, in response to a question which I raised in the form of a point of order as to delays in answering questions, the parliamentary secretary made this comment:

Mr. Speaker, I find these remarks unfair. On numerous occasions, following interventions made by the hon. member or by others, I have shown the government's good will and efficiency in dealing with questions on the order paper.

This was reported at page 698 of *Hansard*.

Quite apart from the irony in these statements when he talked about efficiency and good will in answering these questions, I think that the answer by the parliamentary secretary would lead a reasonable person to believe that a decent answer would be forthcoming shortly. But this was not to be the case.

Last Tuesday, the parliamentary secretary tabled an answer to my question. The answer to part one reads:

See Beuchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, citation 171(11).

Over the course of the past few days I have had an opportunity to review Beuchesne to find out exactly why the parliamentary secretary was refusing to answer the question. Citation 171(11) of Beuchesne's fourth edition, 1958, reads:

A question oral or written must not:

(11) seek from an ex-minister information with regard to transactions during his term of office.

You can see the ludicrous situation I now find myself in, sir. The minister took the trip on the weekend of February 4, 5 and 6 of this year. On February 22 I placed my question on the order paper. It dragged on through the intervening months,