

tration that lets on that it favours freedom of information—there is a bill on the Order Paper now respecting freedom of information which members of this government are crowing about across the country—yet does not answer a question as simple and straightforward as this. What on earth is the national secret? What is so terrible that the Canadian people should not know about it? Which people on the Canadian Transport Commission along with their wives have free passes on Air Canada? I do not understand this. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could now tell us why this five-year-old mystery still exists.

Mr. Collenette: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) talks about a record but, without wanting to be too facetious, I think he sounds a bit like a broken record. He has been able to repeat this question today. This is not the first time he has repeated a question which has been on the Order Paper for some time.

The hon. member seems somewhat defensive about the fact that the government of which he was a supporter for nine months did not answer the very same question. I think his defensive remarks speak for themselves.

I note that there is a rule, referred to in *Beauchesne*, citation 299(2), about repetition. I ask whether one should be allowed to repeat day in and day out questions which have been put on the Order Paper in the normal way.

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. It seems to me that any member loses his privileges if he does not have the right to repeat again a point of order of which this government has absolutely failed for five years to take note. We have privileges here. We have rights as members, but this bunch across the way has no respect for the rights of this House. Hon. members opposite have no respect for the rights of members of Parliament. They simply answer what they want to answer and hide the rest in the Privy Council Office. I think it is time something was done to stop this charade of a government putting it over on the House of Commons and the Canadian people and doing nothing about the real issues in this country.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, presumably the comments of the parliamentary secretary about repetition in the House of Commons could be directed at me too because this is the seventh time I have had to rise with regard to question No. 1,852. That question cannot claim the five years and five days record of the question of my hon. colleague, but I can invite the parliamentary secretary to join with me in the commemoration of the twenty-seventh week my question has sat on the Order Paper.

My question is a simple one. The minister who is supposed to be responsible for answering that question is the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox), who is currently before a parliamentary committee defending the government's freedom of information legislation and saying that the government has a commitment to freedom of information. Surely the government has a responsibility, in dealing with the House of Com-

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mons, to demonstrate that it is serious about this. Rather than simply saying there is no problem and rather than trying to prevent members of Parliament from bringing matters to the attention of Your Honour when he does not do his job, the parliamentary secretary has an obligation to tell Parliament for what reasons questions have not been answered. Is it because the minister responsible for freedom of information has chosen to suppress information, or is it that in this particular instance this parliamentary secretary is incapable of getting a lazy minister to do his job?

While I am on my feet, may I also bring to the attention of the parliamentary secretary question No. 1,439, which was put on the Order Paper on July 11, and question No. 1,450, which was put on the order paper July 16 of last year? Both of those questions deal with the government's advertising program. Again this is not something which should be confidential information. If the parliamentary secretary would have the courtesy simply to tell hon. members on this side of the House that he is refusing to supply answers to certain questions, we would be prepared to stand some of them down; but surely we are entitled to some explanation.

Mr. Collenette: Madam Speaker, if I may, I would like to refer the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) to my six previous answers to his six previous questions. I have assured the hon. member that I am doing my job in trying to get answers. Evidence for that is that we have tabled in this House over 80 per cent of the answers requested by the opposition. I think it is grossly unfair for the hon. member or any of his colleagues to accuse the government of not being willing to supply information. The government has never refused to answer any question on the Order Paper.

The hon. member knows full well that many of the questions asked are complicated and that many of them require replies which involve expensive research. I find it rather ironic that the party which champions restraint of government spending puts so many questions on the Order Paper which require millions of taxpayers' dollars to answer, and then hon. members opposite state in the House that the government is not doing its job. The government has done very well in the last year and a half by answering 80 per cent of the questions. We shall continue to press for answers.

In the last month or so certain questions standing on the order paper in the name of the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville for quite some time have been answered. I pledge to Your Honour and to all members of the House that I will do my best to obtain answers to all the questions on the Order Paper.

Madam Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.