

Privilege

I think both parties are right. There is a request for the government to answer questions and there is a 45-day limit. By putting this in the late show or the adjournment debate we tried to find a solution to the problem because the problem is that we have no way of enforcing this request for the 45-day limit.

There is no sanction on the government if it does not answer the question. That is the problem. There is no way the opposition parties or any backbencher can force the government to answer the question, short of asking the government to be willingly co-operative in giving us an answer to the questions that are asked. If the government does not do that, of course we have no recourse; we have no way of forcing it to answer.

I say to hon. members that it is our responsibility, not the Speaker's responsibility, to put in those Standing Orders a sanction which would be applied to the government if it did not answer the questions. The 45-day limit plus the debate on the late show was some form of public acknowledgement that there was indeed an injustice being done here.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened very carefully to the point made by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, also the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona, and frankly his intervention is helpful because it gives us some history of what led to the present situation.

I have listened carefully to the hon. parliamentary secretary as well as to the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, a member of some experience.

There is a problem clearly in the situation we face. It probably ought to be addressed, because as the parliamentary secretary for the government speaking on behalf of the government, has said, he can understand the frustration of an hon. member putting the question. The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona said that it was the duty of members of Parliament to put these questions, and I must say I do not find too much difficulty being persuaded that the government "ought" to make the answers available.

On the other hand, the hon. parliamentary secretary has indicated that sometimes that could be difficult to do. As has been pointed out again by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, within the rules there is no sanction that either the Speaker is given to impose or that is available to the House.

I think it is a matter that clearly needs to be addressed. However, I think it is more a point of order than it is a question of privilege. I think it is a serious matter. I think the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was certainly acting in a completely appropriate way in raising it for the consideration of the House.

• (1520)

I must move on to a question of privilege. The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair has a question of privilege.

COMMENT DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, during Question Period I addressed a question to the minister of energy. What might be described as the substantive answer to the question, I am sure, will be judged by those who read *Hansard* and I think will be judged severely. However, that was not enough.

In responding to that question, the hon. minister uttered an untruth with such sanctimonious confidence that some are likely to believe it. I have therefore passed along to the minister of energy a copy of the registration of my vehicle which is a Thunderbird Super Coupe that goes from zero to 100 kilometres in 7.2 seconds. That is a North American characteristic. I had that car last year. I had a Thunderbird the year before that and a Thunderbird before that. I would only ask that the minister of energy inform himself better on the practices of Petro-Canada and his responsibilities and, if he has the curiosity to know it all, that he become better advised on the kinds of cars all members of this House might drive, including those on his side of the House.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is offended, I am willing to withdraw. I just know that one thing happens. I watch *on the Hill* and so often his colleagues get up in high dudgeon in this House and argue about cross-border shopping. When I take a look at what they drive, they are not helping their union brothers and sisters.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that those who are watching this on television are not going to be impressed with that kind of nonsense. I hope they are not. I posed a straightforward question to the minister which he could not answer. He was no more capable of answering that question than he was able to distinguish between fusion and fission. I wish that he would fuse