

Date 1963	Lib.	P.C.	Statement by Mr. Speaker on Questions			
			N.D.P.		S.C.	
Oct. 18	—	45	15			6
Oct. 21	1	25	9	(165)		6
				S.C.		S.C.R
Oct. 22	—	36	11	4		4
Oct. 23	—	15	3	1		10
Oct. 24	1	18	10	5		7
Oct. 25	5	28	12	2		8
Oct. 28	1	16	19	—		5
Oct. 29	—	26	8	2		3
Oct. 30	—	14	11	(15) 1	(57)	(42) 5
Totals	23	574	208		222	

Mr. Speaker: In making these observations, I am fortified by statements made by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition of the present house during the course of the past year or so, and these statements have been very much in my mind since last Wednesday, October 23, when the most interesting debate on the setting up of the committee on procedure and reform took place.

As a private member I recall with great interest hearing the statement made by that most experienced parliamentarian, the present Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. gentleman who, when prime minister said—and it was referred to last week—as found on page 2011 of the House of Commons debates, November 26, 1962:

As far as questions are concerned, it is not for me to suggest, but I think that the number of these questions could be greatly reduced; and if we were also to have a self-denying ordinance that, under ordinary circumstances, we would not go over half an hour on questions before orders of the day we would save 15 full days in an ordinary session without, as I see it, losing any ground that might be gained through questions or in any way interfering with the rights of the opposition.

That position was restated by the right hon. gentleman on Wednesday, October 23 last at page 3926, when he said:

Provided the answers given by the government are not evasive, provided they place the facts before us, provided they do not hide and cover up, as was alleged today and last night, I would be inclined to believe that if, in addition to the regular questions on the order paper, we all agreed to the self-denying ordinance to which the Prime Minister made reference, oral questions could very well be limited considerably. To what extent would be a matter for determination and recommendation by the committee. In the United Kingdom the period is an hour and that covers written as well as oral questions.

During the same debate the present Prime Minister referred to his own remarks on the subject in 1962, and I quote him in that

reference as found once again at page 3925 of the debates of October 23, 1963. He said:

We have agreed to a reduction, if it is a reduction, to 30 minutes of the time spent on oral questions on orders of the day.

The leaders of the New Democratic party and the Social Credit party also spoke in that debate and referred to the need for an examination of the practices governing our question period, and the latter reminded us of the practice in New Zealand where a daily 30 minute limit on the question period is observed.

This leads me to a suggestion which I respectfully intend to make now to the house. It is a suggestion upon which hon. members may care to reflect between now and the opening of the house on Monday next. My proposal, which I shall put as concisely as possible, is as follows.

1. In placing questions, hon. members seeking information from ministers will be expected to adhere to the rules governing questions as enunciated by my predecessors and as set forth in the previously mentioned extracts from section 171 of the fourth edition of Beauchesne.

If these rules are not observed by hon. members posing their questions, I would immediately and without further discussion inform the hon. member that the question is out of order, and pass at once to the next question.

At the same time it should be remembered that ministers too have a responsibility not to abuse the question period. In that regard may I remind hon. ministers of paragraph I of citation 181, Beauchesne's fourth edition, which reads as follows:

Questions must be answered briefly and distinctly, and be limited to the necessary explanations, though a certain latitude is permitted to ministers of the crown whenever they find it necessary to extend their remarks with the view of clearly explaining the matter in question.

2. No more than two supplementary questions, which must be genuine supplementary