

*Points of Order***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On September 18 I put a written question on the Order Paper and asked for a response within 45 days. It was one of those questions which every government department should have had at their fingertips and I have not had a response yet. Now we are going into the Christmas recess and the House will not sit until February. I cannot understand why there is not enough competence to answer my question in a reasonable length of time.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I will try to explain the situation to the hon. member. His question was:

What is the total dollar amount spent on advertising by the government and its crown agencies in fiscal years 1991, 92, 93 and 94, by province, in each of the following mediums: television, radio, daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, monthly newspapers, billboards, and direct mail?

That is going to be a massive reply, I have no doubt. The hon. member knows, as well as I do, that the previous government spent millions and millions each year on advertising. This is going to take massive research.

The latest information I have is that there are 14 government agencies which have to file the information which is required in order to provide the kind of detail which the hon. member wants.

• (1045)

I am sure the persons responsible for this, and I take some responsibility, will work diligently throughout the Christmas holiday to come up with an answer that will satisfy the hon. member. I know he wants an accurate and complete answer, and that is exactly what he will get.

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POINTS OF ORDER**OFFICIAL OPPOSITION**

The Speaker: I have a notice of a point of order from the hon. House leader for the Reform Party.

So that we will know how we are to proceed, I believe there have been some minor discussions. I will recognize the Reform Party. Then I will recognize the Bloc and the government. Then I will invite anyone who wants to add anything at all to this point of order. I will hear it all.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to talk about some very important issues: first, democracy; second, the role of an opposition in a parliamentary democracy; and, third, the office of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

There are no formal criteria for selecting the official opposition. By longstanding tradition the leader of the opposition is the prime minister in waiting and his caucus is the government in waiting.

Should the government lose the confidence of the House:

—it is the largest minority party which is prepared, in the event of the resignation of the Government, to assume office.

This is from Erskine May, the 20th edition, page 252, and Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 196.

Doubt exists as to the Leader of the Opposition in this assembly. This doubt among other things stems from the fact that there is near parity of numbers between the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party. The Bloc does not have the best claim to be the government in waiting and the present leader of the Bloc has given notice to the Chamber of his departure.

We believe that the Reform Party should be the official opposition because we are the largest minority party that is prepared, in the event of the resignation of the government, to assume office.

I suggest at this time another criterion for a party becoming the official opposition. After the Alberta provincial general election in 1983, the legislative assembly found itself with two opposition parties with equal numbers. Much energy was expended on both sides and much energy has been expended since assessing and evaluating that decision. However Speaker Amerongen based his ruling, found in the summer 1983 edition of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, on the following basis:

First, the popular vote received by the NDP was over 200,000 throughout the province. The popular vote of the other party was considerably less.

Second, the Speaker concluded that since the two NDP MLAs represented a broader range of interests—and that is very important—they should be the official opposition.

Let us look at the facts facing us in this assembly. In addition to achieving the election of 52 members of Parliament, the Reform Party elected these members in five provinces. Further, the Reform Party received the second highest popular vote. Over 2.5 million electors voted for the Reform Party, which amounts to 18 per cent of the popular vote nationally. By comparison, the Bloc Quebecois received about 13.5 per cent of the total popular vote in one province.

We contend that the Reform Party represents a far broader range of interests than the Bloc Quebecois, both in terms of the popular vote and in terms of our caucus including MPs from the five provinces. Electors who voted for Reform but whose MPs