

Order Paper Questions

LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR POSTAL EMPLOYEES

Question No. 2,787—Mr. Cossitt:

With reference to the answer to question No. 2,524 which states in part that 200 postal employees are being given crash courses in the French language, by province, how many employees are being given crash courses of a similar nature in the English language?

Mr. Gary F. McCauley (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): A total of 280 postal employees from the province of Quebec took part in courses of a similar nature offered in the English language.

RULES OF HOUSE OF COMMONS

Question No. 3,236—Mr. Cossitt:

Under the present rules of the House of Commons, are Members of Parliament not allowed to question directly House of Commons expenses, appointments and promotions and, if so, is the government prepared to give consideration to proposing alterations in the rules to enable Members of Parliament to have full control of their own House and to have the right to question the administration of the House in the House of Commons?

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): All inquiries about the administration of the House of Commons may be directed to the Speaker of the House of Commons. Standing Order 65(13) provides that "All matters relating to the administration of the House and the provisions of services and facilities to members shall be deemed to have been referred to the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services on the first day of each session." The names of the chairman, vice-chairman and other members of this committee are published as an appendix to House of Commons *Debates* each Wednesday. Successive editions of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms are quite clear about these matters, and even if the Table ignores these rules and allows questions such as this, the government considers the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville to be able to read the relatively straightforward precepts cited which are published in both official languages.

[English]

Mr. Smith: I ask, Madam Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Madam Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, approximately three weeks ago when the parliamentary secretary made his debut in the House as the newest Dr. No, I raised a reference to question No. 30 which has stood on successive order papers in various Parliaments and sessions of Parliaments for a period of five and a half years. The question concerns, very simply, the members of the Canadian Transport Commission who have passes on Air Canada, their names, the names of their wives who have such passes and the names of employees who have such passes.

I would think it would be very simple for the question to have been answered, but in five and a half years it has not been answered. In this regard, I was advised by officials of Air Canada at least eight months ago that the answer had long

been prepared and long since sent to the minister's office for passing on through the Privy Council to this House. Therefore, I raise it again. I intend, if the Chair permits, to keep raising it periodically to find out why a question of such a serious nature is not answered when it involves the Canadian Transport Commission which, in effect, is the body that controls Air Canada to a great extent. At the same time, the CTC has in return been accepting passes from Air Canada, gifts from Air Canada in effect, yet we are not allowed to know who these people are and what they may be doing or may not be doing, as the case may be, in return for these gifts from Air Canada. I believe it is time the people of Canada were told.

● (1530)

There are two other questions. One is question No. 93 asking for the names of all executive assistants and special assistants to members of the cabinet, their salaries, when they started and anyone under contract to a cabinet minister. That question has been on the Order Paper for months. I think it would be relatively simple to compile an answer to that question unless there are more niggers in the woodpile, such as what we heard about recently in the case of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. There is certainly something wrong when that question cannot be answered.

Finally, question No. 136 goes back to the election of May, 1979 and again concerns Air Canada when the Liberal Party rented from the Crown corporation, Air Canada, a DC-9 to travel the Prime Minister around the country. This aircraft was never paid for. The bill was still in dispute months later. I asked when the bill was paid, and what amount was paid. Officials at Air Canada told me this answer was prepared eight, nine or ten months ago and placed on the minister's desk.

Perhaps I can ask the President of the Privy Council, whom I see in the House, to respond to this question, rather than the parliamentary secretary, because he would be in a better position since he has been in office longer and obviously he is more familiar with these points of order since I have raised them so often. I would expect the President of the Privy Council would be able to tell this House why we cannot receive answers to the three questions I have just mentioned. It indicates to me that there is a deliberate attempt on the part of the government to hide some legitimate things we have a right to know about. We find out all sorts of secrets about three ministers flying to Winnipeg on three different aircraft. This is the type of thing that is prohibiting them from telling the House who has all the free passes, who is having all the joy rides on Air Canada and things of that nature.

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, first of all, it is regrettable that the hon. member made his point by using a remark that I consider to be a racist slur. It may or may not be unparliamentary, but I believe it is beneath the dignity of this House to use such a phrase in the House.

With regard to questions on the Order Paper, the government has a very good batting average. Prior to the resumption of the House on October 14, we had answered over 83 per cent