

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION****USE OF GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT BY MINISTERS—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister I should like to direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister, whom I presume is the Minister of Finance. My question refers to order paper questions answered Monday which revealed that cabinet ministers have used government aircraft 5,000 times in the last several years at public expense to travel to many places, including to a large extent to their constituencies. For example, the Minister of Agriculture has travelled 188 times to Windsor and back. Will the Acting Prime Minister advise the House whether the government will issue immediately an order to stop this practice which is costing millions of dollars; if it will not issue such an order, why not?

● (1436)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there are well known regulations to that effect, and ministers abide by them at all times. The aircraft are at the ministers' disposal in the performance of their ministerial duties, which may sometimes involve a flight back or to their constituencies. I think the procedure is well known. The regulations very much work to Canada's best interests.

[*English*]

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister refers to the fact that during the past few weeks the Prime Minister has been saying a great deal about restraint on the part of the Canadian people. Let me ask him this. Will the government immediately stop such flights as the one made by the Minister of Agriculture from his Windsor constituency to the resort area of Myrtle Beach in the Carolinas; and finally, is it government policy that there should be one code of restraint for cabinet ministers and another code of restraint for the Canadian people?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that nor other flights. I know the procedure is well known. Ministers use the aircraft when needed in the performance of their duties. Of course they have been invited a number of times, both by myself when President of Treasury Board and by my successor, to show restraint in the use of aircraft.

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[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE**DATE OF APPOINTMENT OF REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question which would normally be directed to the President of the Privy Council and which in his absence I will direct to the Acting Prime Minister. Further to the statement of the Presi-

[*Mr. Horner.*]

dent of the Privy Council to this House on February 4 last, can the Acting Prime Minister state whether or not a chairman of the special committee to review the Public Service Employment Act has been appointed and, if so, whether or not this special committee intends to hold public hearings. If it does so intend, when?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to reply to the hon. member but I will pass his question to the President of the Privy Council. If he is not here tomorrow I will be delighted to give him an answer.

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FEDERAL COURT ACT**ALLEGED USE TO DENY INFORMATION—REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY**

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General. Having in mind the emphasis placed in the Speech from the Throne on human rights and open government—somewhat belated but nevertheless appetizing—is the hon. gentleman prepared to submit to a committee of this House the right to inquire into the extent to which the government has made undue use and probably abuse of its powers under the Federal Court Act to deny information to people, particularly to public inquiries, a use which has often resulted, as in the case of Mr. Walter Rudnicki, in the denial of public and civil rights?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that when a minister on this side signs an affidavit under section 41(2) of the Federal Court Act, whether myself or any other minister, he is acting under a statute and authority granted by this Parliament. I would add that there is not only the power but a duty to do so in these circumstances.

[*English*]

Mr. Baldwin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members on this side of the House are well aware of the law; what we doubt is the use the government is making of that law.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Is the minister, with that usual good humour which he has as an able minister, prepared at least, if he is not going to submit the matter to a committee, to make a statement to this House within a very short time telling us exactly what the government has been doing, for example, in the Laycraft inquiry into crime in the province of Quebec, issues which concern us on this side of the House very much indeed?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, in connection with the Laycraft inquiry there was, of course, an affidavit submitted by myself which has absolutely nothing to do with the subject matter of the inquiry, and I answered questions specifically on that