

Inquiries of the Ministry

Depending upon circumstances and the manpower available to do the necessary work on the return, replies from various units arrived back at headquarters over a period of time.

In so far as the specific item mentioned by the hon. member is concerned, this was reported from Quebec command at the beginning of March. At that time, although detailed reports had been made to the police on the important military equipment stolen from Shawinigan armoury, stocktaking of individual items of clothing had not been done. However, stocktaking was carried out on March 16 and as a result of the hon. member's complaint I have now obtained a list of clothing stolen at that time. This list includes: 13 blue berets, 16 ponchos, 1 groundsheet, 10 khaki shirts, 5 battledress trousers, 14 olive drab field service trousers, 33 pairs of high black shoes, 16 trouser belts, 86 pairs of gloves, 22 neckties, 4 pairs of mittens and 137 pairs of socks. I might say, Mr. Speaker, that much of this has now been recovered by the police, but again at this date a detailed list is not available.

For the benefit of all hon. members I should like to draw attention to the fact that questions of this nature require a considerable amount of work and result in substantial cost to the public. On occasion when members put questions on the order paper an attempt is made to obtain clarification from the member in order to meet his specific request at the minimum cost. However, in view of the fact that the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is a former minister of the crown and also was for a time minister of national defence, it was presumed that despite the considerable cost involved he required the information as set out in his question without any of the qualifications which might have resulted not only in an answer being supplied quickly, but also in limiting the amount of work involved in the preparation of that answer.

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is not within the jurisdiction of a minister of the crown to lecture any hon. member of this house just because he asked for information and that information was not supplied. I put a written question on the order paper, and the ridiculous answer was given that an unknown quantity of military clothing was stolen. Now the minister is attempting to explain away the inefficiency within his department. Shawinigan armouries was apparently completely stripped of military equipment and the minister was unable to give information to the house. Now he tells

[Mr. Cardin.]

us that in March he had this information, yet my written question was answered only on Wednesday, and answered incompletely.

These lectures from ministers of the crown as to how we conduct ourselves in this house are out of place. We are entitled to ask for information from the government and we are entitled to complete answers, which we have not been getting.

Mr. Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the only reason for giving the answer I gave this morning was because of the remark made by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre when he said that the answer given on Wednesday was a flagrant abuse of the rules of this house. We did everything we could to obtain the information for the hon. member as I have mentioned, and I think his intervention this morning is completely ridiculous.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think we have had sufficient discussion of this important matter.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to rule on whether or not my statement is correct. I said it was a flagrant abuse of the rules of the house to give an incomplete and insufficient answer to a written question. The minister says this is quite proper, and I would ask for a ruling from the chair in regard to this matter.

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that this matter does not require a ruling from the chair. Perhaps it could receive investigation by the committee on procedure and organization. I think we have had sufficient discussion of the matter, and I suggest we move on.

FLOODS

FRASER VALLEY, B.C.—REPORTED DANGER DUE TO HEAVY SNOWFALLS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister of northern affairs. I wonder whether the minister has received reports in connection with the potential flood danger in the Fraser valley as a result of the recent heavy snowfalls in the mountains surrounding the area.

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources): Mr. Speaker, following the tabling of the Fraser river board report I wrote immediately to Hon. Mr. Williston, ministre of lands and forests in British Columbia, suggesting to him that we had the option of either disregarding the report or acting upon it, and I said I thought