

CPR—SUBSIDIZATION

Question No. 1,375—**Mr. Jones:**

Is Canadian Pacific Railway subsidized in part by Canadian government funds, and if so, what are the names of its shareholders and what is the amount of their shares?

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council): For the first part of the question, please see replies to questions No. 17 ordered December 18, 1974, No. 1,250 ordered April 29, 1977, and No. 491 answered this day. For the second part of the question, see Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, citation 171(dd).

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: The questions listed by the parliamentary secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

MR. ALEXANDER—REPLY GIVEN TO QUESTION 1,216

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in respect of questions on the order paper, and I would beg your indulgence for a couple of moments, sir.

On January 25 I placed a question on the order paper, No. 1,216, which reads as follows:

For each department, what was the total expenditure on air travel during the last year for which figures are available and, in each case, how much was for (a) domestic (b) overseas flights?

A return was tabled last Friday, and I would have been reluctantly prepared to accept the advice of the President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) when his return was tabled as follows:

The information on all air travel booked directly by each department i.e. last minute reservations, etc., is not readily available. To provide an accurate reply would entail a lengthy and costly examination of thousands of travel claims for every department, which cost in manpower and time would be exorbitant or prohibitive.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I would have been reluctantly prepared to accept that, but we have received further answers in respect of that same question. We find that the Department of National Defence did give a reply to the effect that, because of the complexity of the question, they could not answer it. I would have been happy with that as well.

However, we have an answer in respect of the Department of External Affairs, and it was at this point that I began to feel that the House was being misled by the minister or the office

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of the President of Privy Council, or that they were at least being less than honest with members of parliament. This department did answer the question. They were able to come up with the figure of some \$4 million.

That is not the end of it, sir. We then received another return, and this is most important because sometimes I find that the office of the President of Privy Council is less than co-operative. I do not suggest officials intentionally attempt to mislead the House, but in this case at least I think they were less than honest. The return from the Department of Supply and Services is as follows:

Insofar as the Department of Supply and Services is concerned:

The total expenditure on air travel booked through the Central Travel Service of the Department of Supply and Services was \$30,539,494.00 in 1976-77, the last year for which complete figures are available.

Information is not accessible on the division between domestic and overseas flights.

My point of order arises from the return tabled by the President of the Privy Council through the parliamentary secretary which, in effect, states that the question is too complex, would cost too much money to answer, would call for the expenditure of a tremendous amount of manpower, and accordingly will not be answered department by department. We then find a department answering the same question, namely the Department of Supply and Services, which refers to expenditures in terms of air travel for 67 agencies, including the departments.

I suggest there are too many of these stock type of answers. With all due respect, the parliamentary secretary has egg on his face. I hope in the future when questions are replied to there will be some co-ordination. The replies to question 1,216 would indicate there is something lacking in respect of co-ordination of answers given to questions on the order paper.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Parliamentary Secretary to President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we guarantee one thing: the most serious and complete research possible in order to give answers that are as complete and as accurate as possible. Unfortunately, we cannot give the hon. member a guarantee that he will be satisfied, on the political level, with the replies he receives. We are not here in this House to serve the political ends of the hon. member; we are here, at the taxpayers' expense, to try to give him the most complete answers possible.

As was explained in the reply in most of the departments concerned we could not obtain the requested details; that is why, because of the costs and the time factor involved, the hon. member did not get the answer he had requested. Fortunately, in some cases, he did get a global amount but no breakdown, precisely for the reasons explained in the reply we gave him. In short, Mr. Speaker, once again, the employees of the Privy Council office always do their best to give hon. members on both sides of the House the most responsible,