

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Charles Cantin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I take notice of this question.

[English]

HEALTH AND WELFARE

MEDICARE—PROVINCES PREPARED TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. W. Monteith (Perth): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a question to the Prime Minister. Would he indicate which provinces have now stated their intention to participate in federal medicare by March 31, 1969?

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I will have to take notice of the question. I do not have the information in my mind.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question. Would the Prime Minister, when looking up this information, determine whether the \$35 million in the revised estimates includes the cost which will apply to all the provinces which have indicated their desire to enter medicare by that date?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could answer this question. The \$35 million in the revised estimates is the amount which is expected to be spent in the current fiscal year on medicare.

Mr. Monteith: With all the anticipated provinces in the program?

Mr. Benson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

QUESTIONS ASKED OF MINISTERS ON ORDERS OF THE DAY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, which I can fully support by Your Honour's rulings throughout the last session of parliament, under which I and other members of the house were not permitted to ask questions of ministers which did not pertain to their own departments. In view of the fact that I and other hon. members were refused permission to do this, it should naturally follow that no minister should be permitted to answer questions which do not pertain to his own department.

Inquiries of the Ministry

The system introduced by the Prime Minister has thrown that all out of whack. For example, when the hon. member for Vancouver East asked a question which was directed to the Minister of Transport, he was informed by the Prime Minister he would have to wait for an answer until the minister's return to the house, which will not be before Tuesday.

The situation in which an urgent question is asked and we are told by the Prime Minister that an answer will not be forthcoming sometimes as late as five days hence is making mockery of parliament. It is also a mockery of parliament that today we have in the house only eight ministers out of twenty nine.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Matters of great importance are sometimes raised—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member kindly state his point of order.

An hon. Member: How many members do you have on your front benches?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): With the Liberal side acting up again I did not hear your remark, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the would-be leader from British Columbia, wants to take the floor.

Mr. Speaker: May we have order, please. The hon. member should state his point of order, on which I will give a ruling.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): My ruling, sir, goes back—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): It might not be a bad idea if I did give a ruling. My point of order is substantiated by the rulings of the Chair throughout the last few sessions of parliament, when hon. members were not allowed to ask questions of a minister unless those questions pertained to the department of the minister to whom the question was directed. Mockery has been made of that practice by the Prime Minister. It is time we had a definite ruling from the Chair, and it is time the Prime Minister was told how parliament should operate.

Mr. Speaker: I have no difficulty in making a ruling on the point raised by the hon. member. If he will remember the circumstances to which he referred, it was the hon. member himself who, along with other hon. members,