

Points of Order

much information we can make public without jeopardizing the commercial prospects of these companies. That could very well be the reason there has been a delay. However, I would again ask the hon. member for York-Peel, what constitutes a delay? Each question must be looked at in its own context.

There were questions raised by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville concerning the Taschereau papers. This matter has come before the House in the last few weeks. I would like to inform the House that it took two years to bring these answers forward because they dealt with a very sensitive matter. The Taschereau papers were being reviewed, as was mentioned in those answers, and this is a very complex matter that goes back 40 years.

My purpose in giving this reply is to let the hon. member and others know that this is not a simple and easy matter of putting a question on the Order Paper and expecting a reply as of yesterday. Each question must be looked at in its own context. I believe it will then become apparent why replies are quick in coming forward or are slow.

Mr. Stevens: Madam Speaker, partly in the context of what the parliamentary secretary has now said, I noted that his rationalization for not giving us the information with respect to de Havilland was that it was a commercial concern, and that I would respect, in the free enterprise system, that sometimes that type of information cannot be made public. It is obvious to every hon. member that if that, in truth, was the answer, it could presumably have been given a week after I asked the question, and I could have taken appropriate steps to try to obtain the information from other sources.

My second point of order concerns question No. 1,775. This is another question which has been outstanding for four months. This question makes the same requests I made with respect to de Havilland, but this time we are dealing with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I think the parliamentary secretary could perhaps offer an explanation to the House now as to why—in the case of a clear Crown corporation clearly there is no question of free enterprise or competitive advantage—they have chosen to keep secret what that company has been spending on advertising, free or subsidized publications or other information conveyed to the public.

Mr. Collenette: Madam Speaker, I answered this question in part; I think it was yesterday. I am just trying to find the reference in *Hansard*. Perhaps this was in response to the hon. member for Dufferin-Grey-Waterloo. I may have that wrong. I am sorry.

An hon. Member: It may be a question of privilege, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Collenette: I stand to be corrected. I know that I was using the old boundary name before redistribution the last time, and I regret that, but I think everyone knows who I am talking about. Quite simply, there are a number of questions posed by this hon. member and the hon. member for York-Peel concerning the advertising budgets of various government departments, Crown corporations, and, as I said yesterday, we

are trying to get the information in a group so we can present it to the House rather than give isolated answers. Some of the information is available on that series of questions and will be brought forward as soon as we get the information from other departments, so there is no real mystery on that particular question.

The hon. member for York-Peel talked about de Havilland Aircraft of Canada. I am not saying that is the reason, but I am simply saying this is the general constraint I sometimes find, when dealing with Crown corporations. Certain information cannot be released because of the competitive nature of the business that company may be engaged in.

● (2140)

Mr. Stevens: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would point out to the parliamentary secretary that I put questions on the Order Paper asking separately about each company. I did that because I did not want the government to have the excuse, which the parliamentary secretary is now offering, to group all of the companies together before the parliamentary secretary could give us the entire answer. However, I will not press for information concerning certain expenditures of various other companies that is still outstanding. Let me refer the parliamentary secretary to question No. 2,042 in which I asked:

1. What was the total cost of the Prime Minister's December-January world tour?
2. What percentage of the total cost of the trip will be paid by the Canadian taxpayer?

I think this is something which is of great interest and I would like an explanation to be given to the House why, so long after the tour, we are still waiting for an answer to my question.

Mr. Collenette: I cannot answer that particular question tonight but I will try to look into it for the hon. member.

Mr. McKinnon: Madam Speaker, my question too is on the failure of the parliamentary secretary to answer what would seem fairly simple questions on the Order Paper. I was glad to hear him say that the time taken depends on the context of the question. He is quite right. Simple questions should be answered much more quickly than the complex ones.

I asked a question on December 15 because of an answer he had tabled shortly before concerning the increase in real terms in the expenditures of the Department of National Defence. The answer which came back said that this excluded statutory costs. So I simply asked:

What has been the increase in the real terms in the Department of National Defence's expenditures, including statutory costs, for each fiscal year 1970-71 through 1979-80?

All they had to do was to add statutory costs. I am sure that had I asked this question during consideration of the defence estimates, I would have had the answer before the end of the meeting; the question is that simple, yet for three months they have been unable to put it on the Order Paper. I fail to understand that. I suspect the reason is they send the ques-