

*Order Paper Questions*

believe there is probably a growing proportion of answers that must be dealt with in this way.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I do not rise for the purpose of complaining about the length of answers and placing them as it were in mummified form as orders for returns, and I can understand that some questions take a long while to answer. I have three questions on the order paper, about two of which I have no complaints, Nos. 759 and 766, although one would have thought that since November 5 the answers could be given to the questions regarding how many convictions there have been for the crime of kidnapping since 1969. The officials have called up and said that, having looked thoroughly into the matter they find that apparently they do not have the information up to date. The other question was how many convictions for rape have been returned by juries since 1965, and again the answer is that it is a very difficult problem on which to give an answer. I will not argue about that, although it strikes me as passing strange that the government of Canada does not have up to date information regarding these crimes which are so serious to the people of our country.

There is one that I do object to, namely, No. 780. On November 8, I asked a simple question regarding the total amount paid to the sculptors, with respect to names and addresses who produced, (a) the statue of the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen; (b) the statue of the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent; (c) the design proposal of the statue of the Right Hon. R. B. Bennet. I cannot understand the concealment here of an answer. The government had the answer last October 25 when I asked for it personally. We have waited now three months. This indicates an attitude of mind on the part of this government that shows contempt for members of this House. They answer when they feel like it, or they hide it in orders for returns when they decide to do so.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to support the point of order raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). I noted today, as I have noted on other occasions, the response of the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Reid) in which he said that the practice has grown up and that they have decided that answers will be put in *Hansard* only if they are not over a certain length. This is a practice similar to that with respect to the tabling of documents. The government makes decisions as to what it is going to do, and then acts as though that were the rule of parliament.

The only rules of parliament are to be found either in the Standing Orders or in Beauchesne, to which the hon. member for Edmonton West has already referred, namely, that answers are made orders for return if they are too long to be put in *Hansard*—"too long" is not defined—or if they require answers from more than one department.

Now, let me draw attention to one of the questions that today is being made an order for return. It is on the order paper as No. 1,106 in the name of the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe (Mr. Mitges). The question asks how many

[Mr. Reid.]

abattoirs are under federal jurisdiction. The answer will be a figure. It will not be very long. The next part of the question is: where are they located? The answer will be a list, which might be either long or short, but surely not too long. The next part of the question is: how many are engaged in the slaughter and processing of horses for human consumption? That will be another figure—just one figure. The next part of the question is: where are they located? I do not imagine that there are many abattoirs in Canada slaughtering horses for human consumption—unless they are horses on the payroll, if I may make that reference to an incident that occurred some years ago.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I submit that this is an example of what the hon. member for Edmonton West is complaining about.

I joined in this protest the other day because I have had this experience over the years. Some of the questions I put on the order paper every year—and I admit that I try to keep certain information up to date—were some years answered in *Hansard* and some years answered by means of orders for return. I think that this unilateral way of making this decision by the Privy Council office is not in keeping with the best traditions of parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. In listening to the comments of hon. members regarding the delays, for example, in getting answers and in asking for some questions not to be placed as orders for returns, I find, with all due respect, that these matters might very well be brought together because when we hear the number called out, it is so long since we asked the question that we agree supinely that it should become an order for return. We have forgotten it completely, and we do not have the number on the tips of our fingers on Mondays or Wednesdays so as to be able to rise and say: no, I want it in *Hansard* today. For example, I have an answer here that was provided, and last Monday I agreed that it should be made an order for return. It is not overly long, only three pages of statistics which I think should be available to the Canadian people reading *Hansard*.

• (1450)

They cannot get this information if they are away from Ottawa without getting in touch with the clerk at the table to have this material copied and sent to them. I wonder if there is not some way of convincing the government House leader of this. During a trip on which I accompanied him to London we learned that as many as 30,000 questions per year are put on the order paper in Britain, and every single one of them gets at least some sort of an answer within seven days. Some questions here remain on the order paper and are never answered; they have to be replaced at the next session.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cossitt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a different point of order in regard to unanswered question 1,233 concerning