

*Supply—Privy Council*

my view that parliamentary traditions and principles are subverted by the facetious nature of some of the questions directed at government by the opposition. In addition to the oral question period, members have the opportunity to place questions on the order paper.

There is no suggestion—and it would be ludicrous to suggest otherwise—that somehow it is impossible to ask questions of ministers. Really, Mr. Chairman, it is ridiculous to make that suggestion. Not only are oral questions permitted five days a week, but a wide range of questions can be placed on the order paper. There are also opportunities to ask questions during the consideration of estimates and on many other occasions. It is to be noted with interest that no disapproval has been expressed by the opposition in this house to the proposal advanced by the government to provide special research assistance so that the opposition can do a better job this session. Apparently that proposal is acceptable; yet none of us has heard one word from the official opposition commending the government for its unprecedented action of extending this special assistance to the opposition.

I do not want to belabour the point, but surely government today is so complex that it is not unreasonable to suggest that ministers are not able to spend every day of the week for a certain period of time waiting to be questioned—yes, and waiting to be pilloried at times for on occasion the question period becomes little more than a political baiting carnival. If we are honest, we will admit this fact.

I believe that the role of the opposition today—and I speak as someone who has served some years in opposition—is not the outmoded concept of opposition, namely to oppose and oppose and oppose, but it is to oppose responsibly; and this includes using the question period to the best effect. It is my impression as a newcomer to this house that if questions were properly developed in caucus before opposition parties came into the chamber, the necessary questions could be asked intelligently and reasonably, and reasonable answers could be given. But if we refer to *Hansard* and read some of the questions which have been asked since the opening of the session, I do not think any hon. member of the house can take pride in the quality and motivation of many of them.

I simply reiterate what was said by my colleague, that surely this is a time when we

[Mr. Perrault.]

should give the government's new proposal a fair test period. Let us see how it works. I assure members of the opposition that members on the government side of the house are just as concerned about the necessity for a strong opposition as are they. If this system does restrict freedom, I can tell you that I for one will seek to have the system changed, but it should be given a fair test. It seems to me we have belaboured this point long enough and that now we should set to the task of working constructively for the people of this country.

**Mr. Crouse:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to speak only briefly on the estimates of the Privy Council. A survey of the expenditures is very revealing. We see a saving of \$300 in the maintenance of the Prime Minister's residence, half a million dollars on general administration, half a million dollars on royal commissions, and \$2½ million will not be required this year for visits of state, as in 1967. Obviously there are other savings that could be made, and if the members of the cabinet, or supporters of the government, will but take the time to keep in touch with the grass roots, the average working man, I am sure they will learn that his chief concern and the concern of Canadians generally is the rising cost of government and its wasteful extravagance.

We in the opposition have expressed our concern in this regard. We are concerned about the principle implied in the roster of ministerial attendance supplied to us by the Prime Minister. Here we are, with the largest cabinet in this country's history, the biggest crew, if you will, on board our ship of state that we have ever had, but now we find that the main reason for increasing the cabinet seems to be used as an excuse for more ministers being absent from the house when we wish to put urgent questions to them.

In my opinion it is the responsibility of the cabinet to be in this house to answer urgent questions when they arise. It should not be necessary for us in the opposition to have our questions juggled back and forth, like a yo-yo, while we wait for replies from the proper minister. In sailors' terms, we in the opposition today are bucking a headwind. We have urgent questions to ask, and we must tack back and forth over the whole spectrum of the cabinet while we wait for replies.

When I have an urgent question to put to the cabinet, it may not of necessity be an urgent question to me; but each of us, due to