

Statement by Mr. Speaker on Questions

(Mr. Speaker Michener, page 1393, February 26, 1959.)

4. Supplementary questions are matters of grace. (Mr. Speaker Michener, page 1393, February 26, 1959.)

5. A minister is entitled to notice, and answers cannot be insisted upon nor is it regular to comment on the refusal to answer oral questions. (Mr. Speaker Michener, page 1393, February 16, 1959.)

It may be opportune at this time to draw the attention of the house to citation 171 of the fourth edition of Beauchesne, from which I have extracted a number of the rules there set forth. The citation may be abbreviated in part as follows:

In putting a question a member must confine himself to the narrowest limits.

In making a question, observations which might lead to debate cannot be regarded as coming within the proper limits of a question.

The purpose of a question is to obtain information and not to supply it to the house.

A question, oral or written, must not:

- be trivial, vague or meaningless;
- multiply with slight variations, a similar question on the same point;
- repeat in substance a question already answered or to which an answer has been refused;
- inquire whether statements made in a newspaper are true;
- contain an expression of opinion;
- be hypothetical;
- be a speech, however short; . . . nor be of unreasonable length;
- seek for purposes of argument, information on matters of past history;
- ask a solution of a legal proposition, such as the interpretation of a statute or of a minister's own powers, etc. . . ;
- refer to a debate or to answers to questions during the current session;
- embody a series of questions which should be moved as an address or order;
- anticipate an order of the day or other matters;
- raise a matter of policy too large to be dealt with in the limits of an answer to a question;
- refer to speeches made outside the house; but in the case of a cabinet minister, it is permissible to

ask the Prime Minister whether such speech represents government policy;

—ask the government's opinion on matters of policy;

—seek information set forth in documents equally accessible to the questioner, as statutes, published reports, etc. . . . ;

—seek information about proceedings in a committee which has not yet made its report to the house;

—relate to matters which passed outside the walls of the house and do not relate to any bill or motion before the house.

We all recognize that the opposition has the right and, indeed, the duty to question the conduct of the government, and every effort should be made in the enforcement of our rules and in their implementation to safeguard that right.

The oral question period is, however, unknown to our rules, and that fact greatly increases the difficulties of the Chair. My authority for this statement is based on standing order 39, which provides only for questions to be placed on the order paper, and standing order 41 which requires 48 hours' notice. Beauchesne's fourth edition deals with this matter in citation 173.

A breakdown of the oral questions amongst parties and groups since September 30 to date shows the following totals: Liberal party, 23; Progressive Conservative party, 574; New Democratic party, 208 and the combined Social Credit party, 222. With the permission of the house, a detailed breakdown of those totals is herewith tabled. If I may have permission, I should like to table it. Agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Editor's note: The table above referred to is as follows:*]

Questions asked on orders of the day being called (since house reconvened) for the period September 30 to October 30, 1963.

Date 1963	Lib.	P.C.	N.D.P.	S.C.
Sept. 30	2	55	7	10
Oct. 1	1	42	10	20
Oct. 2	—	24	11	20
Oct. 3	—	37	7	14
Oct. 4	2	30	6	15
Oct. 7	—	—	11	8
Oct. 8	2	36	10	11
Oct. 9	1	11	2	11
Oct. 10	1	57	14	15
Oct. 11	—	6	4	5
Oct. 14	1	21	14	9
Oct. 15	3	15	9	6
Oct. 16	2	17	5	9
Oct. 17	—	—	—	—

[Mr. Speaker.]