

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We have reached the end of the question period. I will recognize the hon. member for Assiniboia and then call orders of the day.

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ENERGY

VOLUME OF OIL EXPORTS TO UNITED STATES

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can the minister inform the House whether he has received any reports in the last few days regarding a rapid increase in the volume of exports of Canadian oil to the United States?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to the situation which has existed for the last several months, there has been a substantial increase in exports from western Canada to the United States. As I indicated to the hon. gentleman's colleague several days ago, we are paying very close attention to this and if there is any prospect of Canadian refineries going short we will not hesitate to impose export controls.

Mr. Knight: To be more specific, can the minister advise the House whether he has received recently reports from his own senior advisers or officials of a major increase in the volume of exports of Canadian oil to the United States?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I told the House about that last week.

Mr. Knight: A further supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for a last supplementary. We have gone beyond the end of the question period and I will have to call orders of the day.

Mr. Knight: Is it the minister's intention to have the National Energy Board investigate this situation and establish export quotas in line with the policies affecting natural gas?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I have told the House several times already that the National Energy Board has had this matter under investigation and, indeed, has made very full reports on it. I also indicated that if the industry indicates it is not capable of handling the increased volumes we will not hesitate to impose export controls.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I have noted with a great deal of concern, both today and in recent days during this session of the present parliament, that a great many hon. members are not finding it possible to participate in the question period. In saying that I am not casting any reflection on the Chair. I do say it, however, because I have watched the proceed-

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

ings very carefully during the question period and have noted that a great many new members who have tried valiantly to be recognized in an attempt to have their voices heard in this chamber have not been successful.

It has always been my opinion, Sir, that the 264 members of this chamber are equal. You, Sir, have been appointed especially to look after us to the best of your ability. I have always believed that you have looked after us as best you can and I am sure all new members appreciate that fact. At the same time, because of the system under which we operate at present and the length of the question period, it is not possible for a great many members to participate in the question period. I am referring as much to hon. gentlemen on the back benches on the government side as to those in this party. I think every member should have a chance to ask his question if it is urgent and important. I know that a great many urgent and important questions go unanswered.

I believe that we must look very carefully at the system under which we now operate to see whether all members are being given equal treatment. I suggest, Sir, that on Mondays and Wednesdays, when written questions are answered, we might adopt a procedure similar to the British system whereby on those two days members who have questions on the order paper, even if they are in a somewhat different form, might be given an opportunity to ask a supplementary question. In that way hon. members would be given a better opportunity to participate in what I consider to be a very exciting form of proceeding if it is carried out in the right way.

There are at present many new members in the House and there will probably be many more new members in the days ahead.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: They should be made to feel that they are part of this institution and be given every possible chance to take part in its proceedings and represent their constituents in a proper manner.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre De Bané (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in this regard I should like to make a suggestion to Your Honour. Obviously, it is impossible for all hon. members to be heard within one hour. I therefore wonder whether the Chair might not, all other things being equal, allow a small number of government members to put questions. I noticed, for instance, that over the past hour the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Cyr) has tried desperately to get the attention of the Chair, and that no government member has managed to put a question.

I sympathize with Your Honour in his extremely difficult duties but humbly suggest, if it is at all possible, that he allow government members to put just a few questions at each sitting.

[English]

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, on the same point may I make a suggestion that I hope would assist Your Honour in the difficult time you have during question periods. It