

S. O. 31

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will entertain a question from the hon. member for Nepean and then the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, and if we could get in with the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, we will, before eleven o'clock. Point of Order, the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Blaikie: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have raised this many times in the House. The instruction with respect to the question and comment period is clear. The Chair is advised to recognize members of parties other than the person who is speaking, if such members are rising. In the absence of members rising from parties other than the person who is speaking, the Chair is free to recognize people from that party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Generally it can be that practice, but the hon. member for Winnipeg—Strathcona was not in the House, then sitting there and not rising. The hon. member for Nepean was rising. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona was rising. I said if there is time I will call upon the hon. gentleman.

Mrs. Gaffney: First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte for a very compelling speech on the reasons for relooking at VIA Rail and the needs of Canadians right across the country.

My question arises from the statement from the member on the government side of the House and I would like my colleague's opinion on how we would propose paying for VIA Rail. We have all known that the manufacturers' sales tax—and the government side of the House has known this since 1984—that there is a \$350 million loophole annually where moneys were being lost in revenue to the Government of Canada. The government has known this since 1984 and has not plugged this loophole.

I would like my colleague's comments with regard to the deficit for operating VIA Rail. Does he see that this money could have been moved over toward the VIA Rail deficit and it could have reduced that in some manner?

Mr. Tobin: I want to point out that the committee—and I do not have time to go into details—does not believe the government will save one penny on the deficit by cutting VIA Rail. We had some very noted economists come before our committee—again non-par-

tisan contributions—who said that when you have taken the loss of tourism dollars, the loss of jobs, the loss of direct and indirect spin-offs to the economy, the pay-out in social welfare programs and unemployment insurance, the additional cost in having increasingly clogged highways and airports and building new runways, you are not going to save a cent. All you are going to do is spend more money in other areas and in the process congest highways, congest our airports, and most shocking of all, pollute this fragile environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 35, the House will now proceed to statements by members under Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, according to an article in today's edition of *The Gazette* of Montreal signed by Andrew McIntosh, a Granby engineer would have been given assurances by the Office of the Prime Minister that an RCMP investigation in the Gravel case would not result in any charges being laid against the individual in question. Those are very troubling allegations, particularly in view of the fact that this House has heard of similar accusations as a result of incidents earlier this week. Because of the *sub judice* rule, I cannot describe those incidents in any great detail.

In the space of a few days we have heard of possible political interference by the government in two separate RCMP investigations. The independence of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from any political interference or possible political interference is of paramount importance to the proper administration of justice in this country.

These allegations must be looked into. If they are unfounded, so much the better. If they turn out to be true, the House will have to deal with this issue and more particularly the government should respond as soon as possible.