

Oral Questions

assure us that he will do his best to see that this investigation gets top priority?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, actually the formal request was received by the Director of Combines Investigations, I am informed, not yesterday but the day before. I am sure he is carrying out his statutory responsibilities but I will continue to be in touch with him for that purpose.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair definitely will call orders of the day after the hon. member for Vegreville has been heard.

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AIR TRANSPORT**RECIPROCAL LANDING RIGHTS WITH ALITALIA IN MILAN—POSSIBLE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY**

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and arises out of a question posed by the hon. member for Halton. In light of the declared aviation policy defined in 1965 which in effect would place Milan in an area to be served by Canadian Pacific Airlines, and in view of the government's slowness in awarding the landing rights for the city of Milan, can the minister indicate to the House whether the government is now considering a deviation from that policy as defined in 1965?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): No, Mr. Speaker, we try to have a rational policy and I hope it will be known by the House shortly.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day. The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate rises on a point of order.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, this is a point of order which affects all members of the House of Commons and, indeed, the Canadian nation. I trust that in hearing my point of order Your Honour will not interpret it as resulting from selfish motives. There is nobody in this House of Commons who has less reason to raise this point of order than I. If one looks back over the past five years one will find I have had my fair share of questions and comments in the House. My point arises from the fact that I look around every day and see about 20 or 25 members rise in the House at question time trying to ask questions.

Earlier today a question was raised about regional development, one which had serious implications not only for economic development but for national unity. Out of a sense of justice to all members, Your Honour was required to bypass this subject after several questions. I quite understood this and I think other hon. members did as well. However, there are other questions just as fundamental, and if hon. members cannot raise them in the House of Commons it is my contention, as a rookie in the House, that this will manifest itself throughout the country. A lot of the frustration that we have results from the fact we cannot get things resolved through the debating forum in the House of Commons. This frustration is going

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

to build up in the country and result in a lot of unnecessary bad feeling.

Mr. Speaker, I am no relation at all to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), but I feel that if you go back to Magna Carta you will find that the fundamental rights of members of the House of Commons are the right to be heard and the right to speak. I can quote from several sections of the 1958 version of Beauchesne, particularly where it says that a great deal of latitude must be allowed in the House of Commons which is a forum where every phase of public affairs can be discussed and where every member has the right to be heard, even if in doing so sometimes the rigidity of procedure is disregarded.

I remember reading *Hansard* back in 1961 and 1962 when I was interested in one day becoming a member of the House. A few hon. members, amongst whom was J. W. Pickersgill who represented my district, raised hundreds of questions in the House of Commons day after day, questions which affected the people for whom they were speaking. We are getting to the point today, because of the 40 minute question period and because the opposition is larger than the government, where many members are not given the right to raise questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, we spend hours of debate on subjects such as agriculture, manpower, fisheries and many other subjects which are boring and of interest only to one lonely member, unwatched from the press gallery and unobserved by people in the general gallery. This gives us hundreds of hours of debate which are meaningless, which are not reported and which do not give the country a chance for—I do not know what the word would be if I were using a medical term—'catharsis', it does not give the catharsis which the country needs.

I would strongly recommend to Your Honour that while hon. members have a little bit of patience left the House leaders take this question a little more seriously than just hearing what I have to say today. I think that we should lift the ceiling on the question period on one day a week or even on two days a week. I think that the good, common sense of hon. members would not encourage them to go beyond responsible behaviour. If we cannot agree to have one or two days a week when we ignore the length of the question period, then consideration should be given immediately to extending it to at least an hour.

I get my share of questions because I do not ask the initial question but usually supplementaries related to questions asked by other hon. members. However, today I stood up and I was beginning to get concerned when I was not recognized, but as I looked around there were 40 or 50 other members standing up. Some of them sat down again and others walked out in disgust. Mr. Speaker, they are here to talk about issues as fundamental to their regions as regional development is to my region. I know that I am speaking for all Canadians when I say the question period is one time when we, as Members of Parliament, can bring forward issues that are of monumental importance in a forum in which they can be properly aired. The cutting off of questions at the end of 40 minutes is encouraging