

House of Commons Procedures

will be no time at all for questions other than those from Members on the front bench.

In this regard I am not blaming the Leader of the Official Opposition, the leader of our party or the hon. Member for Lapointe, to name just three examples, who are on their feet a number of times every day. I am not going to be too critical of the present Speaker because I know it is a difficult job. But I know that if I want to ask a question, or if any Member of the back benches on the Opposition side, or even backbenchers on the Government side, want to ask questions, I presume we will all have some difficulty.

Today was a good example. I wanted to ask a question which the President of the Privy Council did not think was a proper question for orders of the day. But the Speaker could not decide this until I had asked my question. I stood up when the question period started at three o'clock. At four o'clock the Speaker—and I am not blaming him—wanted to end the question period. I was still trying to ask my first question. The Leader of the Opposition and a number of other Members had been on their feet five, six, eight times.

Mr. McIntosh: You should sit down here.

Mr. Orlikow: It may be worse for those who sit behind the Leader of the Opposition, although I do not think so.

Mr. Starr: Your leader was up four times too.

Mr. Orlikow: I included my leader. I am not blaming the Leader of the Opposition alone; I did say that. There was a time though when there were at least 10 or 12 questions in a row from Members of the Official Opposition. I do not question their right to ask questions, but Members in this group and other groups could not get the floor at all.

Mr. Churchill: There are 93 of us.

Mr. Orlikow: If we are going to restrict time and be fair to all Members, the Speaker—whoever he is; I am not thinking only of this session—must exercise a good deal more authority and judgment than he has up till now. It seems to me that if we are going to restrict the question period to half an hour a day, then I would agree with the hon. Member for Royal and others who have said that the Speaker will have to rule a large number of questions, including possibly the question I tried to ask today, as not of an urgent nature and therefore permissible. But aside from that it seems to me that the Speaker will have to use some judgment in restricting

Members so that no Member will be able to dominate the whole half hour.

I would suggest here that no Member be permitted to ask more than two questions on any day when other Members want to ask questions, and that a series of supplemental questions should not be permitted. As the Speaker has said on so many occasions, what we really get is not a series of supplemental questions but in fact a debate. We now have the period after ten o'clock for Members who are not satisfied with answers they receive, and surely that is the place.

Mr. Churchill: You are going to make it awfully hard for your colleagues in your party.

Mr. Orlikow: I am not concerned with my colleagues in my party; we can look after ourselves. I am concerned with the rights of all backbenchers regardless of party. We are all supposed to be equal here. It seems to me that the Members of this House are going to be like the animals in George Orwell's novel "Animal Farm", where he said that all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others. It seems to me that unless the Speaker is going to tighten up the whole question period, when many Members of Parliament—and all of us are elected from constituencies and theoretically are equal—and especially those on the back benches, will be a good deal less equal than other Members. I hope the Speaker will give some consideration to this problem if and when we adopt these rules.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Chairman, I am really speaking for the benefit of the Speaker, particularly the Speaker who is in the Chair during the question period. It seems to me from my own experience that one way of cutting down oral questions is to have a much speedier reply to written questions, and especially starred questions. One of the things I hoped would be considered by the President of the Privy Council and House Leader is that we get together, somewhat along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for Carleton the other day, when he introduced his motion, and have a complete review of the whole subject of written questions, including starred questions, and the various rules in connection therewith.

I have been here long enough to have heard Speaker Michener, Speaker Lambert and the present Speaker—you find entries in *Votes and Proceedings* to confirm this—read off all the different rules regarding questions.