

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday September 11, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TRANSPORT

SUGGESTED LEGISLATION TO COMPEL USE OF AUTOMOBILE SEAT BELTS—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): Mr. Speaker, in view of the continuing increase in automobile fatalities and injuries in Canada and the fact that through the introduction of legislation in other countries making the use of seat belts compulsory these same countries have experienced a 20 per cent reduction in automobile fatalities, I would move, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, seconded by the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Beattie):

That the government implement forthwith legislation compelling the use of seat belts by both driver and passengers in private automobiles.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will inquire whether there is unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORT

TABLING BY MINISTER OF STATEMENT ON NEW AIR ROUTES TO UNITED STATES AND CUSTOMS PRECLEARANCE

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, due to the deep interest shown in Canadian-American negotiations for the establishment of new air-line routes and privileges of customs preclearance, under Standing Order 41(2), I have the honour to table two copies in French and English of the public statement that I will make this afternoon.

[English]

Mr. Mazankowski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that I believe the minister, in doing what he has just done, has in my opinion seriously breached the traditional practice of the House. This statement is of great magnitude from the standpoint of

both the economic policy of this country and, indeed, the future of transportation, and it is customary for documents of this nature to be presented in advance to the opposition parties so that opposition spokesmen can respond adequately. In my opinion, what the minister has now done is a deliberate affront to parliament and the people of Canada and I do not think his action should be condoned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: I understand that the minister has called a press conference for this afternoon. I believe that the only reason for his doing so is to maximize the political benefit from his statement as much as possible.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Mazankowski: Although this policy may be consistent with the practices of the government—I could cite many examples—and consistent with the practices of this minister who has denied the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications the right to examine the Canadian National and Air Canada reports, I do not believe any member of this House has any excuse for allowing this to take place.

I do not want this point to go unnoticed. I believe that the minister's action has created a situation which is not conducive to the traditions of the House nor to its orderly functioning. I would humbly submit to the minister through you, Mr. Speaker, that he request the House to revert to motions some time later this day so that spokesmen for the opposition parties can have an opportunity to comment on the matter.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in a few brief words I should like to support the point of order raised by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). As Your Honour is aware, this is a point that has been raised a number of times. On most occasions Your Honour has found our objections not valid. On most occasions you have found that the kind of document that a minister was seeking to table under Standing Order 41(2) was proper under the terms of the order itself, but on at least one occasion, when our friend of former days, the Hon. E. J. Benson, sought to table what was in effect a press release, Your Honour found otherwise. I therefore wonder—I can only wonder because I have not seen the document; perhaps Your Honour has—whether this one does not come within the category of a press release rather than a report or a government paper. In that respect I wonder whether it would not be better, since we are still on motions, for the minister to read the statement to us and then hand it to the press conference at three o'clock.