

Inquiries of the Ministry

resources will speak out. I do not know what Standing Order I can quote in order to justify that I have a question of privilege, but if the Standing Order which enables ministers of the Crown to make statements on motions is to be abused by presenting this kind of statement outside the House, thus circumventing our rights, we might as well eliminate the procedure for statements on motions and enable hon. members when important documents are subreptitiously brought before the House—

Mr. McIlraith: Explain.

Mr. Lundrigan: —to present the points of view, briefly and succinctly, of Canadians who are affected. The behaviour of this minister, which is reflected throughout the whole cabinet, is part of a process to downgrade Parliament and is preventing us from presenting the views of the people whom we represent.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Paproski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister of National Health and Welfare was not in his seat during the question period. He has just arrived in the chamber. He will not be here tomorrow, and I would like to pose a question to him which is very urgent because there is a deadline of December 8—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member could do this with unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimity. I have to draw to the attention of hon. members that I extended the question period by a few minutes to take into account the fact that we had a number of points of order and of privilege. As I say, I tried to take this into account by extending the question period. That period of our activities ended 15 minutes ago, and I think this has been a rather generous extension.

Mr. Paproski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will ask—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will have noticed that I asked whether there was unanimous consent to prolong the question period, and there was not unanimity.

Mr. Paproski: Then I rise on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to say that the roster system has gone to hell; but this is a very important matter. There is a deadline so far as having a team in the 1972 Olympics. That deadline closes on December 8. There is still a possibility for us to enter the 1972 Olympics with a national team. All I want to do is ask the minister a question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member—

Mr. Paproski: The hon. member for Northwest Territories said no.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. My impression is that the hon. member has pleaded his case with eloquence. If there is agreement to extend the question period, the hon. member might be allowed to put his question.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, I regret there is not consent.

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May we have order, please. The Chair is not getting assistance from either side of the House. I am trying to do a job on behalf of members of the House. If members think the House should not be sitting, there are provisions under the Standing Orders which would allow the Chair to take into account the fact that there is not the order that there should be in the House. The hon. member for Hamilton West.

Mr. Alexander: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member for Northwest Territories did not notice that the Minister of National Health and Welfare had given his consent with respect to answering the question. I am sure that if the hon. member had noticed this, no objection would have been raised. As the Minister of National Health and Welfare wishes to allow this very important question, I would hope that agreement will come from the other side of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that we should not spend the rest of the evening trying to ascertain whether a question can or cannot be asked. The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the question period I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he would make a statement on a treaty, the contents of which he tabled tonight. The Secretary of State for External Affairs permitted the Minister of Fisheries to reply to the question. The Minister of Fisheries circumvented the rules of the House by saying yes, he would issue a statement. Coincidentally with the minister saying that, a statement was issued and circulated to members of the House and to the press.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I object to this circumvention of the rules and practices of the House. It is incumbent upon the Secretary of State for External Affairs to make a statement in the House on this very important treaty, thereby enabling all hon. members to respond to his statement. I object to the procedure that has been followed tonight. The rules have been circumvented by the Minister of Fisheries in issuing this statement to the press before a statement was made to the House.

Mr. Sharp: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I draw the attention of the House to *Hansard*, page 10067, where there is recorded a question put to me by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate. He asked: "Will the minister table that document and when?" I complied with the request of the hon. gentleman.

An hon. Member: Why are you afraid to make a statement on this?