

Supply—Labour

benefits. Because a great number of unemployed who are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits are receiving unemployment assistance.

If the minister can tell the house what has been the increase in unemployment assistance this year, we might find out where is the trouble and see at the same time that the number of the unemployed has not decreased that much.

It was just a play on words: unemployment assistance for those not eligible for unemployment insurance, but those eligible for unemployment insurance are listed as unemployed.

[Text]

Mr. Rapp: It is not my intention to speak for very long, but I should like to say it is gratifying for me to see the concern shown by the Minister of Labour and also by the committee for these unemployed people who receive unemployment insurance benefits. I should like to point out that there are thousands and thousands of farm labourers who, when they are unemployed, cannot receive unemployment insurance benefits. These men also have families to look after and on many occasions I have had bills on the order paper asking this house to provide that they, too, might be included under the Unemployment Insurance Act in accordance with the recommendations of the Gill commission.

My bills were talked out, but I wish to use this occasion to urge the minister to give serious consideration to their subject matter the next time one is introduced. Indeed, if this could be done before my bill comes up for consideration it would be even more appreciated by the farm labourers and by the country as a whole.

Mr. Churchill: I do not wish to prolong these proceedings to any great extent but, as other members have pointed out, we have now discovered what was being hidden from us last week. We have found out the main item in these estimates which required immediate attention by the committee—an item which should have been dealt with last week. I now wonder why people on the other side of the house failed to respond to our suggestion last Thursday, when the whip of our party twice asked them if they would disclose the essential items so that we could look at them and see if we could not pass them quickly. I myself said to the acting prime minister at four o'clock on Thursday: Extract from the list of estimates those which are essential and must be passed; let us have a look at them and see what we can do, and if they are not too great in number, and you will stand the other items, we will

[Mr. Plourde.]

accept an appropriation bill, not printed or typewritten, but in oral form, which would be a most unusual procedure. This was the co-operative spirit we showed on Thursday last, but no response came from the other side. And all the time they knew that this item needed immediate attention.

It is strange this should have been deferred. On Monday the Minister of Finance is reported to have said in the corridors: I am terribly afraid the press will find out about the unemployment insurance fund. What was he afraid of? Then the word began to go around that the unemployment fund was exhausted.

Mr. Knowles: That is probably why he said it.

Mr. Churchill: Then people across the country were disturbed as to whether their cheques would be available. I think it is disappointing that the Minister of Labour was not more forthcoming in his answers. On Tuesday, just yesterday—mention has been made tonight of the manner in which this matter was brought to his attention—he gave three or four answers. First of all, as recorded on page 1595 of *Hansard*, he said this:

—It is my hope that we will be able to deal with the supplementary estimate providing for a loan to the fund within the next short period, so that the fund will be able to bear its responsibilities within the next week or so.

Note the words “within the next week or so”. He went on:

At present the reserves are not adequate to finance the benefits beyond a very short time.

Well, he lulled everybody into calmness. He talked about “the next short period”. He spoke of “within the next week or so” and “a very short time”. I heard his answer and I thought: Well, everything is all right for a couple of weeks.

Mr. MacEachen: Would the hon. gentleman read the answer to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Churchill: Oh, I have them all underlined.

Mr. Pickersgill: Don't forget half the words.

Mr. Churchill: The answers are these, and *Hansard* records them. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre asked a supplementary question:

Is the item in the estimates regarding this matter one of those that must be passed fairly soon?

The hon. member did not say “immediately”. He said “fairly soon”. Naturally he would say that, after the statement about “a short period” or “a week or so”. And the answer given reads: “Yes, Mr. Speaker”, a