

Unemployment Conditions

Mr. Robichaud: The point of order I wanted to raise, if I may be allowed to raise it, was on the remarks of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. He said we of the opposition are just picking up statistics. We are picking up this unfortunate situation unequalled in Canada's history.

Mr. Speaker: I have not yet had any refusal or acceptance by the house of this proposal.

Mr. Pearson: We on this side feel that this matter should be debated now. The Secretary of State for External Affairs gave what he called facts which indicated that in his mind the urgency was not such that it required debate today. On our part we feel the facts which have been disclosed today require debate today.

Mr. Speaker: If the Minister of Justice wishes to speak to the question of urgency I will hear him, but I am prepared to deal with the matter.

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Minister of Justice): On the question of urgency, there are two comments I should like to make. First, the degree of urgency for debate of this matter can, I think, be measured at least in part by the comments made a moment ago by the hon. member for Vancouver East, who referred to the situation at Elliot Lake. There is no denying the fact, of course, that the figures produced are serious. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs pointed out, however, these figures are issued monthly, and another set of figures is issued weekly. It is surely hardly arguable that the rule can be applied in such a way that you would have a regular interruption of the ordinary business of the house on this alleged matter of urgency each time the statistics came out, especially when you realize that there will be other occasions, and early occasions, when the matter can be discussed.

With respect to Elliot Lake, for instance, the situation has been revealed, but developments there will not take place for a matter of four or six months; and to say that this sort of development makes this matter one of urgency for debate is, it seems to me, to show the inapplicability of the rule to the present situation.

There will be, as has been pointed out, an opportunity to refer to the subject on the supplementary estimates. There will be an opportunity of referring to it on the motion to go into supply, on the six motions to go into supply during the course of this session. If anyone should suggest, sir, that notwithstanding that the house has not been ready to take advantage of the offer made by the

[Mr. Speaker.]

Prime Minister, the opportunity on the supplementary estimates will be limited, I would suggest that they refer to the speech made by the hon. member for Essex East on Friday, February 12, as found at pages 1022, 1023 and following in *Hansard*, where you will see that notwithstanding any ruling made, the hon. member availed himself to the fullest possible degree of the opportunity to discuss unemployment in Canada.

I suggest to you, sir, that the house will find, if the hon. member for Essex East is here, opportunities and methods of discussing unemployment and the unemployment situation generally on the supplementary estimates, unless the hon. gentlemen in the opposition undergo a very marked change in tactics. It is not realistic to suggest that there will not be opportunities in the immediate future, in accordance with the ordinary procedure of the house, to discuss this matter. One does not for a moment say that the situation is not serious. What we are suggesting is that it does not have that urgency of debate which warrants an interruption of the matters appointed for consideration this day, especially when there will be, within 24, 48 or 72 hours, ample opportunities to discuss the matter, as well as many other opportunities during the course of the session.

Mr. J. F. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): In considering the urgency for a debate on this particular question, Mr. Speaker, I should like to draw to your attention the fact that if we were to adjourn the house at this time to discuss unemployment we would have to leave the discussion of a resolution in the name of the Minister of Public Works to increase the money available under the National Housing Act, which would provide a good many jobs in this country. We would have to postpone that matter for a useless debate for which there would be plenty of time later. I think we would be much better occupied in passing a measure that will do something to create some employment.

Mr. Hees: Constructive, not destructive.

Mr. Speaker: In dealing with this application to interrupt our ordinary proceedings of this day under standing order 26 in order to embark on a discussion of "the grave unemployment situation in the country as revealed in a government press announcement made today," I remind hon. members that this is not a new problem for the Chair. Unfortunately the problem of unemployment is a continuing one and has been a continuing one. As I recall it, motions of this kind have been advanced or attempts have been made to deal with the general problem of unemployment under standing order 26, and I have taken the view in the past that that