

*Pages*

**Mr. Chrétien:** On the first proposition, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for the Premier of Ontario to say that we should do that. However, when we had a budget a few weeks ago, he did not move very substantially to reduce the level of unemployment in Ontario. We will look at the problems within our jurisdiction in the spirit of the agreement of the first ministers' conference last February. It has only been a month; we have not had time to put the programs in place.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## THE ROYAL ASSENT

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that on March 22, 1978, a communication has been received which is as follows:

Rideau Hall  
Ottawa

March 22, 1978

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. Louis-Philippe Pigeon, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the twenty-second day of March at 5:45 p.m. for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
Edmond Joly de Lotbinière  
Administrative Secretary  
to the Governor General

\* \* \*

[English]

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

## EMPLOYMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AS PAGES

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) on a question of privilege of which he has given the Chair notice, may I take three minutes to advise the House, before rising later in the day as has already been ordered by the House, of activities that have taken place which I think will be of interest to hon. members with regard to the employment of pages in the House of Commons.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** The reason I preempt the time of the House to do this now is because it will relate to some interest members will have relative to possible enrollment dates at universities. I thought I should take a moment to explain this to members, because during the recess information will be going out about it. I thought hon. members ought to be the first to know.

[Mr. Beatty.]

Since coming here it has been an interest of mine, and many others have shared it and many others had it long before that time, that we find a way to encourage young Canadians to participate in the House of Commons by serving as pages here. That was attempted at the high school level and faced great difficulty because of discrepancies and differences in various academic programs throughout the provinces.

A couple of years ago I asked the Clerk of the House of Commons to attend in Washington to examine the system there. He did, and returned with a very thorough report which was referred to the Members' Services Committee. The members of that committee worked very diligently on the project, with great interest, and came up with what I think is an excellent idea. I hope all members will share it. It is that the program, instead of being operative at the high school level, be operative at the first year university level, which facilitates provincial interchange much more easily and enables residents away from home to lead a much more normal course of life.

Having given approval to that basic idea, we are attempting now in some hurry to implement, at least partially, this program before September, which will involve possible enrollment by students in two Ottawa universities, whose co-operation we have received throughout and for which we are very grateful.

I want to assure hon. members on a couple of counts. First, this program will be phased in in such a way as to ensure that all of those who have served so faithfully and well as pages will not in any way be prejudiced or jeopardized in the employment they have enjoyed here.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** The obvious advantages bear some repetition. We will now be able to secure, in addition to this cross-Canada participation, young people for a year of university, for which they will work as pages and receive a full salary which will enable them to finance their education.

We will, of course, benefit from that kind of participation. We will benefit from being able to do something that is long overdue here, that is, to employ an appropriate number of female pages in the House of Commons.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Speaker:** May I at the same time indicate that we will be giving, in the process, some serious consideration, and I hope that hon. members do not rebel at this, to altering the uniform being worn by pages in the House. While we feel we must maintain the dignity required in the Chamber, it will reflect something that is a little more in keeping with modern times. We have in mind something in the nature of a blazer in the House of Commons green colour, with an appropriate crest, and grey flannels for the boys and skirts for the girls. However, we will receive suggestions from members on that.

I expose this to the thinking of members at this time, first to thank all of those who have been involved in working on this project with such great interest. That includes the Clerk of the