

● (1410)

MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 26

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), to move the adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the crisis in the automotive industry manifested by the announced lay-offs on the week-end which will bring the total of unemployed in this sector to more than 40,000.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has given the Chair, as required by Standing Order 26, notice of his intention to move his motion and has, therefore, given the Chair an opportunity to reflect on some of the considerations that are involved in the granting of a motion pursuant to that Standing Order. There can be no doubt that the recently announced lay-offs in the automotive industry are a matter of importance and deep concern, I am sure, to all members and that an opportunity to discuss them at an early date would, I am sure, be welcomed by both sides of the House. However, the question that the Chair must ask itself is whether or not it is appropriate, and sufficiently of an emergency nature, to warrant the setting aside of the regular schedule of the business of the House. With respect to this aspect I have several considerations in mind, at least four of which are as follows:

The subject matter of the motion, while it concerns a very serious problem, has, in fact, to do with problems related to one industry, and even that aspect is one symptom of a larger problem, that is to say, the economic condition of the country in general. That subject has been before the House more or less since this parliament began, in various forms and, of course, in this particular form, beginning with the budget presentation and being continued in the rather extensive debate which followed. It has been dealt with just as recently as during the last two days of last week, in the committee stage of two of the budget bills.

Furthermore, not only is the matter before the House part of the larger problem but, in addition, the one industry aspect of it troubles me. Questions have been raised before about the textile industry and its difficulties, and what effect those have on unemployment in the province of Quebec. Questions have been raised, as well, about the lumber industry and the effect of unemployment and lay-offs in that industry.

The reason I express concern is related to my resistance to setting a precedent of interrupting the regular schedule of business of the House, to permit consideration of a one-industry problem of this sort; because, it seems to me, to do this would be to put other members who have already expressed similar concerns into this position: That, if they were to do less than seek the intervention of the House in these matters, they would not be fulfilling

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their responsibilities as members. Therefore, frankly, I am very reluctant to set that precedent.

In addition, the business that was announced for today is also connected with the economic situation of the country. I am referring to the housing legislation, which I understand is the intended business. There has been great pressure to bring the matter before the House, because it concerns not only people affected by lay-offs in the automotive industry, but, also, people throughout the country. Therefore, I would interrupt that with considerable reservation.

I am also cognizant of the fact that if there will be insufficient opportunity through the regular channels of the House to debate the matter in the next few days, it will not be long before opposition days will be apportioned. These, I think, would present an opportunity for the discussion of the particular problem which is the subject matter of this proposed motion. For these reasons I would think it improper at this time to grant leave for the moving of the desired motion pursuant to Standing Order 26.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ENERGY

REQUEST FOR POLICY STATEMENT ON CONSERVATION AND DELAY OF LEGISLATION CONCERNING PURCHASE OF BOATS AND AUTOMOBILES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister and government House leader. When will we receive the statement of government policy on conserving energy which the Prime Minister promised us a year ago and which the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources indicated at one point at least we would receive before Christmas? I ask this particularly in view of the fact that legislation is now before the House which will put into effect some conservation measures as they apply to the purchase of boats and automobiles.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the subject of the minister's statement to the House has been before cabinet on a couple of occasions. It is my understanding that preparations are almost completed. I cannot give a date for certain, but I think it will be within the next two or three weeks.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question. Will the government House leader assure the House the government will not proceed with the legislation which to some extent relates to conservation with regard to purchases of boats and automobiles until it presents its comprehensive policy so that we can assess this legislation in the context of the government's overall policy?

Mr. Sharp: No, Mr Speaker. I cannot give that undertaking. There is considerable urgency in getting certainty about the rates of tax, the excise tax for example, that are