

Nickel Industry Lay-Offs

million and \$200 million which must be borne by government, thus creating the necessity that this matter be debated in parliament.

● (1512)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Of course the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) has given the Chair the notice required under Standing Order 26, which has provided me with an opportunity to examine the terms of the motion, to examine the terms of the Standing Order, and to examine the several precedents which were brought into consideration in the recent past.

As has been described, the purpose of the motion is to enable hon. members to bring matters before the House, by way of emergency debate. Standing Order 26(1) reads as follows:

Leave to make motion for the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration must be asked immediately before the calling of government orders.

The terms of that order have been referred to many times. In terms of individual communities and industries, the Chair has often been in a difficult position when attempting to adjudicate upon these matters because the terms of the Standing Order, as such, are to give leave or an opportunity to hon. members to bring matters of a crisis nature before the House which would not otherwise come before the House. Yet, it is not envisaged that that rule ought to be used to bring what are considered crises from individual constituencies or industries before the House. Obviously the difficulty which would follow from that is that if the rule were to be used in that way, it would become the function of the Chair, on an almost weekly basis, to attempt to adjudicate the relative impact of difficulties in individual constituencies.

Certainly, to grant a motion with respect to one industry in one particular area of the country, even if it is my own, would only invite the same kind of application on an almost weekly basis with respect to other areas of the country. That would put upon the Chair the difficulty of trying to attempt to adjudicate in some way the relative impact of, for example, the closure of a linerboard mill in Newfoundland as opposed to a lay-off of some 3,000 people in the nickel industry in the Sudbury basin.

As tempted as I may be to be sympathetic with this particular application, I have to refer back to some precedents which I will cite now to the hon. member and to the House. Upon examination of my own precedents, three of which I will bring to the attention of the House, to grant the application would be reversing very directly my own rulings on these previous occasions. Therefore, I remind the House, for example, that on January 27, 1975 the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) made a very similar application under almost precisely the same circumstances in respect to the automotive industry and lay-offs in the Oshawa area. At that time the remarks of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby included the following:

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

—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.

I reviewed the matter and, among other things, I said:

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—

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 their responsibilities as members.

There was another precedent in December, 1975, which related to some other aspects of the problem. These were raised by the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McRae) who, at that time, was the parliamentary secretary to the postmaster general. The specific and important matter to which he referred is quoted in *Hansard* of December 4, 1975, at page 9715. It reads as follows:

The specific and important matter is the nation-wide strike in the pulp and paper industry, a strike involving some 25,000 members of the Canada Paperworkers Union, and lay-offs of the same order in the bush and allied operations.

In adjudicating on that problem, I said the following:

—there is the additional difficulty that except by virtue of the reference to the anti-inflation measures which are, of course, matters of federal jurisdiction, the fact is that it appears to be a work stoppage in the private sector involving private companies and unions which are not in any way subject to federal jurisdiction.

That was the problem at that time, and some of those aspects certainly are present now.

On October 21, 1977, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) raised another problem. His remarks included the following:

—because of the ruthless and unexpected decision by the Inco metals company drastically to cut back production and mining operations in Canada, resulting in the loss of between 3,500 and 4,000 jobs—

I said that the subject matter before the House at that time was, of course, not only the Speech from the Throne, which gives the widest latitude in debate, but an amendment which would permit even more direct focus on that particular problem.

The first two precedents I have cited to the House indicate that previously the Chair has had to resist, although each had equal merit, the application for an emergency debate on a one-industry or a one-location type of problem.

Furthermore, Standing Order 26(5) calls upon the Chair to determine whether or not the matter might be brought before the House in some other way. In dealing with the application previously made by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, I cited the opportunity for participation in the throne speech debate. A number of members took advantage of that. Subsequently on November 23, November 29, and December 8, debates have taken place on allotted days which were addressed directly to that problem; on November 23—loss of jobs in mineral industry; on November 29—unemployment resulting from importation of foreign goods; and on December