

MANPOWER

EMPLOYMENT OF IMMIGRANTS

Mr. F. A. Philbrook (Halton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. There seems to be a serious paradox where Canadian jobs are held open for Canadian workers by Canada Manpower, and potential immigrants who could fill those jobs are turned away, yet in practice employers are not able to fill those jobs with Canadian workers. Does the minister have any plan either to make immigration more flexible again, in this sense, or to fill Canadian jobs with Canadian workers?

● (1442)

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): My department certainly remains committed to seeing that Canadians have the first opportunity of jobs that are available in Canada, whether they are local people or not. In some cases we have to go across Canada to find them. However, where Canadians are unwilling to move or are unwilling to accept a particular job and will not fill the vacancy, we have to look to others in order to maintain a work force that quite often, in large measure, is Canadian.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION SUPPLIED TO RCMP

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I want to ask him about the recently revealed refusal to supply unemployment insurance information to the RCMP. In view of the fact that this information has been supplied for many years, in spite of the regulation regarding the confidentiality of unemployment insurance information, I ask what type of confidential information was supplied to the RCMP and under what authority was that information given?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the legal opinion I received recently indicated that in the past the information given to the RCMP went beyond that which was allowed under section 126. This was a legal interpretation of that section. It seems to me that it is open to interpretation. Because we wanted to get the matter clarified, it seemed the wisest policy was to issue instructions that information other than that for the administration of the Unemployment Insurance Act or the administration of social insurance numbers should not be released until we had clarification of section 126.

I am happy that the McDonald commission is looking into this particular area to give us advice either that we do have authority to give additional information as the minister shall determine, or that we should amend legislation to do what I

Oral Questions

think is appropriate, that is, to give this information to the RCMP to help their investigations.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister what recent developments caused the ruling to be investigated and forced the government to stop giving that information.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, until the carping of opposition members, we used what we thought was common sense and tried to help the RCMP in their fight against organized crime—

An hon. Member: Organized crime?

Mr. Cullen: I might say that with the passage of Bill C-27, the hon. member's colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton West, quite correctly thought that the minister should have the responsibility for giving information under the Unemployment Insurance Act to other people, and insisted that the wording be changed from "the commission" to "the minister" so that the minister had to accept responsibility. I sought a legal opinion to determine whether we were acting within the provisions of section 126. The advice I have from legal counsel is to the effect that more information is being provided than was authorized by that section. Because of that, I have ordered it stopped.

* * *

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

OVERCHARGING BY BELL CANADA—REFERRAL TO AIB

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. A recent report by Robert Babe to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission indicated that Bell Canada has overcharged its subscribers, who live mostly in Ontario and Quebec, by more than \$1 billion. In light of this report, will the minister demand that Bell rebate to its subscribers their individual overpayments which went to Northern Telecom, a Bell subsidiary?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that report had been commissioned by the director of research and investigation under the Combines Investigation Act. As you know, he operates independently under the statute. He has now received the report. I have not yet read it, but it will be presented as evidence to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, which is the usual practice, and they will make a judgment.

Mr. Peters: I have a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. Has this gouging of the public by Bell Canada been referred to the AIB for rebate action, in light of the advantageous rates charged to subscribers of publicly-owned telephone systems who purchased their equipment on the open