

Oral Questions

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST FOR MEASURES TO SPEED UP PAYMENT OF
BENEFITS

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Minister of Labour, to the Postmaster General or to the latter's Parliamentary Secretary.

It appears that all coded mail is being boycotted in the Montreal post office. This large volume of mail items includes numerous cheques addressed to unemployed people, cheques that are stuck there. Is the minister in a position to inform the House whether he intends to take steps to correct this situation so that unemployed people may receive their benefits?

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I am always interested in problems of unemployment insurance, particularly the distribution of cheques. I will find out if there is any reason for unemployment insurance cheques being unnecessarily delayed.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

AVAILABILITY TO FORCE OF UNITED STATES CIA REPORTS ON
CHILEAN REFUGEES

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Solicitor General. In light of recent revelations of the role played by the CIA in the subversion of the democratic government of Chile, do the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in screening refugees or other immigrants from that country, still avail themselves of reports from the CIA?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, since the RCMP has no foreign intelligence capacity, from time to time when it is necessary they request information from foreign police forces and foreign intelligence agencies in Britain, United States, Europe and elsewhere. In the case of the special program for Chilean refugees, information was requested on some of the applicants from these foreign intelligence agencies. I am not sure if the CIA was one or not. They could have been. However, let me say this: the criteria for entry of those refugees were Canadian criteria and the screening was done by RCMP officers and Canadian immigration officers in Chile. The entry was decided by our people. I am under the impression that when it is necessary for us in Canada to obtain information, we may still ask for that information from the CIA and other foreign agencies, but it is in accordance with our policy and our law.

[Mr. Danson.]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CHILE—REASON FOR CANADIAN AMBASSADOR GIVING GIFTS
TO MILITARY DICTATOR

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): In the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs I will address my supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. It has been reported that the Canadian Ambassador to Chile recently gave to General Augusto Pinochet, the military dictator in Chile, a series of gifts, including coloured illustrations of varieties of Canadian fish, and at the same time expressed the cordial greetings of the Government of Canada. While I appreciate the necessity for diplomatic courtesy, was it under the instruction of the Canadian government that Mr. Ross made this presentation and expressed these cordial greetings to one who is not only a dictator but who has presided over the destruction of fundamental rights in his country—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has described a presentation and asked whether it was made on instructions. That surely ought to be enough.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether our ambassador acted under instructions. I do think it is important in international relations, however, that the people of Chile and the government of Chile have a good view of democracy in Canada. Therefore, I think it is wise that we maintain these kinds of relationships.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST THAT PROCESSING OF CLAIMS BE SPEEDED UP FOR
EMPLOYEES AT GENERAL MOTORS, OSHAWA, ONT., PLANT

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I regret I was only able to give the Minister of Manpower and Immigration a couple of hours' notice of this question. Can the minister inform the House whether any special emergency measures will be implemented to speed up the processing of unemployment insurance claimed by the workers of the General Motors, Oshawa, plant who were laid off in January? Some of these workers have been back on the job for a few days now but are still waiting for their original claims to be processed.

● (1240)

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): It is correct there was a lay-off on January 10, I believe, of some 8,000 workers, a very large number of people. As of this week, all the claimants who registered at that time are in receipt of reporting cards and the process is taking place. Registration, of course, does not of itself trigger the reporting cards, though this, I believe, was the information I got from the hon. member's office today. There certainly was a slight delay in issuing some cards because of the number of claimants. I would add that where there are to be lay-offs of any magnitude at all it would be very helpful if employers were to take us into their confidence in advance so that we could make these