

Privilege—Mr. Cullen

early hour during the day, rather than have it introduced at the last hour of the day, which has always been an affront to members who are asked to make these considerations at a late hour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Thus, I hope the entire process has been beneficial to members. I thank all members for their co-operation in this very interesting discussion.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: May I just take one minute to indicate to the House, as I intended to do earlier in the day, that we are all delighted to see back among us, after a bout of very serious illness, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane).

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gus MacFarlane (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is important to feel part of a club which sends greetings from all sides of the House. Certainly I have mentioned to my own members of caucus my appreciation for their efforts. I have a greater understanding of those who are in hospital, and I should like all members to know that their kind wishes and words were very important to me. Certainly they played a great role in my being back here, where I intend to stay.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MR. CULLEN—STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS ON UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, in my approximate ten years in the House of Commons, this is the first occasion I have had to rise on a question of privilege. That will give Your Honour some idea of the importance I attach to stances which I take as Minister of Employment and Immigration and the attitude I have to the unemployed.

My question of privilege arises out of statements made and questions asked in the House by the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) and the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). Both left the impression that I said Canadians need a "kick in the gut", and the further impression that 8.4 per cent unemployment was the way to achieve it. Later the hon. Leader of the NDP stated that he had checked and confirmed that I had made that expression, but he carefully avoided the context.

In talking to a group of new Liberals at the University of Ottawa—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Paproski: Was it Jack Horner?

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Beatty: Both of them!

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that is their title, and they are proud to wear it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cullen: At that time basically we were discussing the question of unemployment, primarily among young people, and I said the following:

The main feature this morning as I understand it is the question of unemployment and youth unemployment and the government's response to that specific problem. In so far as the federal government is concerned we look first of all at the statistics, which are frightening at the least, namely, that unemployment among youth is about twice the national average so that if unemployment is around eight or seven or eight among the adult male, among young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four it's somewhere in the fifteen per cent mark. And so that is a target group for us. The other area that we have to be so careful with and we get locked in all too often is "What in effect is full employment?" I was absolutely delighted, I guess I should say, that the NDP were finally coming around to recognize that full employment doesn't mean that everybody in Canada is working but they picked a very conservative figure of three per cent unemployment as full employment. Darcy McKeough, you may remember, picked 5.5 per cent and if 5.5 per cent of the work force was unemployed at any particular time that in fact was full employment. The truth probably lies somewhere in between the two figures.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): What is your question of privilege?

Mr. Cullen: If the hon. member will wait, I will get to my question of privilege.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is what you are supposed to be doing now.

Mr. Cullen: I continued by saying:

As a politician I'm not going to get locked into that. I don't think it's a particularly fruitful game for a member of parliament, particularly one on the government side, and particularly a minister who has responsibility for employment policies. Given those particular figures, I think we should remember that about 95 per cent of the people in Canada who wanted work are working and so our target group is that other 5 per cent or 6 per cent depending upon whose figures you're using.

That was the context of the unemployment debate and the words I used at that particular time.

Later I was asked a question by a member of the audience who said: "Mr. Cullen, is it not true that people are living beyond their means in Canada?" She went on to express in various ways how she thought this particular thing was taking place.

My response was as follows:

Well, I think your first comment is dead-on with what the Prime Minister has been saying, that you cannot get more out of the economy than you are prepared to put into it. I think one of the problems that we've had in Canada is that we've been spoiled rotten and that we've been living pretty high off the hog and, as a result of that, we expect that that is, in fact, going to continue. We haven't had what I call a kick in the gut the way the States had when they had this all-of-a-sudden oil embargo. They couldn't get what they required, they had to line up for gasoline and they had such an economic and psychological jolt that they're being a little more realistic in the prices they charge for their products. People that are bargaining as union leaders are taking a much more responsible attitude because they've had this shock value. Now, we've tried to shock the Canadian economy with wage and price controls and we've tried to give them a psychological shock.