

Privilege—Mr. Crosbie

unemployment insurance benefits if they cannot find sufficient work over the next six months in order to requalify. Yesterday, the minister stated that he is more interested in finding solutions than in making predictions. Is the minister prepared to take the preventive action now of extending the period during which Canadians can collect unemployment insurance, until unemployment comes down to 4 per cent?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I believe that the circumstance of being unemployed is serious enough without having hon. members of the House, such as the hon. member for Winnipeg-St. James, engaging in false scare tactics to try to inflame and enrage a circumstance which is already quite grave. I do not think he should be following the example which was set in the House yesterday by the hon. member from Joliette. It was really uncalled for.

What we are concerned about is that we are monitoring the situation very carefully. We will continue to provide a number of programs through the Unemployment Insurance Act to help those who are unemployed and we will continue to show the kind of sensitivity required for the plight of the unemployed, rather than engaging in the kind of scare tactics that the hon. member is patenting as his own particular product and contribution to this problem.

QUERY RESPECTING STIMULATION OF ECONOMY

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, a few days ago the President of the Treasury Board described any move toward a fiscal stimulus to create new jobs as dangerously counter-productive. Yet the Minister of Employment and Immigration stated yesterday that he is much more interested in putting people to work. Will the minister tell the House whether he is now prepared to support stimulating the economy to put Canadians back to work, or does he agree with his colleague that stimulating the economy is dangerously counter-productive?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, we have had a number of exchanges on this. However, I would point out to the hon. member that at the present rate of expenditures in my department alone we are providing assistance to over half a million Canadians, to provide them with either direct employment or opportunities to be retrained during this difficult period. That, I believe, shows a very clear and continuing commitment by this government to help those who have needs.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. CROSBIE—ALLEGED MISLEADING STATEMENT BY MR. CHRÉTIEN—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: I am prepared to rule on the question of privilege which was raised the other day by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). I realize that he is not in

the House. The hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) is in the House.

I am in the hands of the House. I usually do not rule in the absence of a member who has raised a question of privilege but I do not like to delay my rulings. Perhaps I could ask the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) if he would prefer that I rule today or delay it until the hon. member for St. John's West comes into the House.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, under the circumstances, I think perhaps it would be convenient if you rendered your ruling today.

Madam Speaker: On May 20, 1982 the hon. member for St. John's West raised a question of privilege alleging that on May 18, 1982 the Minister of Justice deliberately misled the House in certain answers he made to certain questions.

The procedure on a breach of privilege is well known to this House. A member complaining of a breach of privilege must do it at the earliest possible opportunity during the course of a sitting if a question of privilege arises out of proceedings in the Chamber, or by giving notice to the Speaker at least one hour prior to the opening of the sitting. The member must conclude the statement on a question of privilege with a motion providing the House with an opportunity to take some action which normally is the reference of the matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for examination.

The role of the Speaker in these cases is to determine whether the case meets the conditions which would entitle debate on the motion to take precedence over all other business.

I would first of all like to review two important precedents relevant to the case before us and which were referred to in the presentation to the House. The first is the Lawrence-RCMP case of November and December, 1978; the second is the Profumo case at Westminster in 1963. The House will recall that in the latter case Mr. John Profumo had made a personal statement to the House which contained words which he later admitted not to be true. Subsequently, the House resolved that Mr. Profumo was guilty of a grave contempt of the House. This is the episode which gave rise to the citation in May's Nineteenth Edition at page 142 that:

The House may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

The other precedent, one of our own, involved correspondence between the then Solicitor General and the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, as the constituency was then called. The member had been in correspondence with the minister on a certain matter involving the RCMP and the minister's reply had been drafted by RCMP officials. The former Commissioner of the RCMP later admitted before the McDonald Royal Commission that "the practice was very often minister's letters were not exactly drafted on precise statements of fact". I refer to the House of Commons *Debates* of November 3, 1978, at page 778. In this case, my predecessor, Speaker Jerome, found that, prima facie, a contempt had been committed and said: