

I am not going to take my full seven minutes. I simply ask whether the Parliament Secretary is empowered to tell us now what the definition of personal correspondence is so that private citizens across Canada, or we on their behalf, can retrieve information that relates to their rights and privileges as citizens of Canada, rather than having that destroyed because of a very loose and broad definition of what really is, in the Minister's terms, "personal correspondence".

Mr. Peter Lang (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the status of personal and interdepartmental correspondence of Ministers under the Access to Information Act has been queried. In response, I would like to make four points.

First, where the correspondence constitutes a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada, the Act does not apply to it. These confidences are described in Section 69 of the Act. The essence of the provisions in this section is that confidences in general are not subject to the legislation for 20 years. After that time, the legislation applies.

Second, where the correspondence reflects political and constituency issues, as opposed to departmental business, it is not subject to the Act. This is because such correspondence is not deemed to be under the control of a Government institution. Rather, this correspondence is considered to be part of the Minister's personal records and to be under the Minister's control.

Third, where the correspondence pertains to the operations or administration of a Government institution, it is considered to be under the control of the Government institution concerned and therefore subject to the legislation. As such, it is accessible under the Act unless it is a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada less than 20 years old, or it is protected from disclosure by an exemption provision in the Act?

● (1815)

Four, Section 19 of the Access to Information Act requires that personal information not be released under this Act. Personal information includes, among other information, the personal opinions or views of an individual and correspondence sent to a Government institution by an individual that is implicitly of a private or confidential nature and replies to such correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence.

In summary, correspondence which does not constitute a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada and which is not in the nature of a Minister's personal records is subject to the Access to Information Act. Correspondence subject to the Act is accessible unless it qualifies for an exemption.

Finally, Departments and agencies have received instructions on the status of ministerial records in relation to the Access to Information Act. The circular that was sent out by the Secretary to the Treasury Board to all Department heads is available and I have a copy for the Hon. Member if he would like to take a look at it.

Adjournment Debate

LABOUR CONDITIONS—UNEMPLOYMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, on Friday last, I asked a question of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) in relation to the high unemployment rate in Saskatchewan. My question dealt with the fact that in the last year the number of people looking for work has gone up by 82 per cent, and also that the number of people on welfare has gone up by 46 per cent in the last two years. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that all of this has occurred since the election of the Conservative Government under the Premiership of Grant Devine in April, 1982.

I think it is important that I put on the record some of these very important facts. As I said first, this is information I have received from the 11 Canada Manpower Centres in Saskatchewan and it shows that in the last year the number of people seeking work has gone up by 82 per cent. I will deal with the figures one by one, Mr. Speaker.

In Estevan, there has been a drop from 827 people looking for work to 584 people looking for work between August, 1982 and August, 1983. In La Ronge, there was an increase from 1,545 to 1,905. In Melfort, there was an increase from 1,061 to 1,221. In Moose Jaw, there was increase from 1,794 to 2,153. In North Battleford, there was an increase from 2,849 to 3,090. In Prince Albert, there was an increase from 2,465 to 4,148. That is an increase, by the way, of 68 per cent in one year in the number of people who are seeking work in Prince Albert. In Regina, there was an increase from 4,998 to 10,550 people looking for work, an increase in one year of 111 per cent. In Saskatoon, the figures went from 10,348 to 13,592, an increase of 31 per cent. In Swift Current, there was an increase from 726 to 847 people looking for work, an increase of 17 per cent. In Weyburn, 449 people were looking for work a year ago and now there are 358 people looking for work, a decrease of 20 per cent. In my hometown of Yorkton, a year ago there were 3,407 people looking for work. In August of this year, there were 5,878 people looking for work, an increase of 78 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

In the Province as a whole, there were 30,469 people registered as seeking employment as of August, 1982. In August, 1983, there were 55,316 people registered as seeking employment, an increase of 82 per cent across the Province of Saskatchewan. This has occurred in one year of Conservative Government in the Province of Saskatchewan. This shows, Mr. Speaker, that Tory times are indeed tough times for the Province of Saskatchewan.

There is an increase of 82 per cent in the number of people who are looking for work in Saskatchewan. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in eight out of ten Provinces in the last year, the unemployment rate has gone down. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, both Provinces with Conservative Governments, unemployment rates have gone up.

I would also draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the welfare situation. I have statistics here from the Department of Social Services' statistical bulletin for Saskatchewan and we find that the total beneficiaries of welfare in Saskatchewan in