

Seasonal Unemployment Benefits Terminated

Mr. Speaker: I agree the minister is entitled to the same latitude, but I thought perhaps a cautionary word in view of his opening sentence would be appropriate.

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, this is not the type of case in which leave for a motion to adjourn the house should be entertained, because it has been known since the start of this session that these benefits would expire at a certain time. It is not something which has just come up at the last minute. All hon. members have known this. They have been discussing it off and on since the house opened on January 14; and if under these conditions it were possible for a motion to be entertained to adjourn the house, then I do suggest it would make a farce of this whole rule.

Mr. Speaker, the rule is designed to deal with something which comes up suddenly and in an unusual way. In such situations, then quite properly there is provision for moving to adjourn the house. But here we have what is in effect an attempt to thresh old straw which has already been threshed in previous debates during the present session. Not only has there been opportunity for debate in the weeks which have passed, but there will be opportunity for debate on various occasions during the remainder of the session.

I do suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that you should not be influenced by these synthetic crocodile tears which are being shed on the other side of the house, and that the business of the house should be allowed to proceed in the normal way. These questions are matters of government policy and government policy, determined quite a long time ago, has been carried out. If there should be any change in government policy, then of course it would have to be announced in due course.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): But Monday is the last day; that is the point.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I think I have heard sufficient discussion of the question to enable me to determine it.

The request for leave to move the adjournment of the house is really, I suppose, for the purpose of urging the continuance of the seasonal benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act benefits which expire on May 15. There is nothing sudden or unexpected about the expiry of these benefits. The period of benefits was settled by a decision of this house and parliament, and must have been in the minds of members of the house since that decision was taken, which was some time back. So in that sense there is not a sudden or unexpected change of circumstances which

[Mr. Green.]

confronts the house and requires the suspension of other business to give it consideration.

What in effect we would be discussing—and I think this appears from what has been said by the hon. member who raised this question and the hon. member for Essex East—would be, really, the problem of those who are unemployed in this country and who would be affected by the expiration of these benefits. I do not think I could properly accept a motion which would suspend other business in order to discuss that question, because I have on other previous occasions this session suggested that the problem of unemployment is a continuous problem and not one which should be debated by the house under this particular procedure.

Therefore, consistently with what I have said before, I conclude that this request for leave under standing order 26 should not be permitted.

(Translation):

NATIONAL DEFENCE

ACTIVE SERVICE STATUS OF MEMBERS OF REGULAR FORCES EXERCISE THEIR FRANCHISE

—MR. BOURGET

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Maurice Bourget (Levis): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct to the Associate Minister of National Defence a question of which I gave him notice.

Could the minister tell us whether members of the regular armed forces are, in the legal sense, on active duty?

Hon. Pierre Sevigny (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Levis for giving me notice of this question.

In reply, I wish to inform him that members of the regular armed forces of Canada are, in the legal sense, on active duty. They were put on active duty at the time of the Korean war, and this situation has remained unchanged since then.

Mr. Bourget: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the minister's reply that those servicemen are on active duty, does it mean that, since they are qualified voters, they will be unable to vote in the Quebec provincial election at locations where they are now stationed?

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the minister replies may I ask the hon. member who proposed the supplementary question whether he is not asking for an expression of opinion on a question of law with respect to voting