

tonight is mainly to receive royal assent to the bill providing increases in parliamentary indemnities. May I ask the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), who, I take it, is leading the house, if he would consider having that matter postponed—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Can the hon. member tell me how he can see a question of privilege in what he has just stated?

**Mr. Knowles:** My question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is that I think it is inappropriate and unfair to the house to interrupt a debate on unemployment for a purpose such as this; and I should like to ask the Minister of Labour—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is not a question of privilege at all. I do not think that the hon. member can rise on a question of privilege and ask why we are going to the Senate when we have received notice that the deputy of His Excellency the Governor General is going to be present in order to give royal assent to bills. When royal assent is to take place and we have received notice to that effect, then any bill that has been passed by this house and the other house has to be given royal assent, no matter which one it is. Royal assent is not given when the house is not in session, and when we are summoned for that purpose there must necessarily be an interruption in the debate that is taking place in the house.

Therefore I do not think I would consider establishing a precedent to the effect that whenever a similar incident takes place an hon. member can rise on a question of privilege, if he happens to consider assent to a certain bill not important enough to interrupt the debate, and ask the leader of the house to advise the cancellation or the postponement of the royal assent ceremony. I know the hon. member understands that. Therefore I would ask him not to pursue his question of privilege at this time.

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, so far in this debate we have had the pleasure of hearing a great many very interesting and scholarly addresses on the subject at issue, unemployment. You have also had the advantage of hearing a great many economic theories put forward which have been attributed to prominent economists of the past and the present. In some instances I think these theories were a little oversimplified; nevertheless they have been put forward. I should like to say that I think all the views that have been presented so far are noteworthy indeed, but I cannot help feeling that a somewhat fragmentary aspect of the whole picture has been presented. In

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order to look at the problem of unemployment properly we have to approach it in a logical and orderly way.

First of all, is there unemployment in Canada? If there is, does it exist on a scale sufficient to cause concern? Is it increasing or is it decreasing? Clearly there is unemployment in Canada, and it apparently involves somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 people, although no one seems to know exactly how many are involved. Even the figures given by the minister are apparently subject to certain reservations, as are any statistical data, and the figure of 524,000 persons seeking jobs evidently does not mean that by any means all of these people are out of work. However, the minister did say that in the same month of last year there were 338,000 people seeking jobs.

Does unemployment exist on a scale sufficient to cause concern? Again I think the answer is yes. We have heard that unemployment is always high in January, as it is seasonal; but this year it seems, to put it mildly, to be more seasonal than usual. In a country with a population of 14 million, over half a million seeking jobs is a very high percentage. I believe it works out to almost one person in seven of the available labour force. It would also appear that unemployment is on the increase. Comparing the figures for January, 1953, with those for January, 1954, there is an increase of 186,000 in the number of persons seeking jobs. There has also been a steep rise in the number of those seeking jobs from 338,000 in December, 1953, to 524,000 in January, 1954.

I might point out that in December, 1952, a year ago last December, 237,000 people were seeking jobs, and accordingly approximately 100,000 more people were seeking jobs in December, 1953, than in December, 1952. I think it can be safely said that it is fairly clear that there is unemployment, that it is on a scale sufficient to cause concern, and that it is clearly increasing.

Second, having established that the problem exists, what are we going to do about it? This again brings up several considerations. Is unemployment more prevalent in certain industries or is it general throughout the country? What is the cause? This of course is by far the most important consideration, because if you do not know the cause it is very difficult to find a cure. Having arrived at the cause or causes, are these likely to continue? If so, will the cause or causes be aggravated in the future so as to accentuate the unemployment problem, or will they automatically clear up?

In this regard it would seem that, while the government does not admit there is any