

Questions

replied to Mr. Levasseur that he should first communicate with the Minister of Colonization at Quebec.

Mr. PARENT: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is out of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: No, he is not; he is speaking to a question of privilege.

(Translation): Mr. Levasseur stated that he had already written to the minister but had not received a satisfactory reply. I finally told him that if he wished to communicate with Ottawa, he was at liberty to do so. I, myself, wrote the dispatch, Mr. Levasseur signed and sent it. I am unaware who paid for this dispatch. The amount of \$40 mentioned in the article was paid to Mr. Levasseur after the dispatch was forwarded. Mr. Jeffrey Levasseur admitted to me in the presence of a witness, in my office, that on his return to Chicoutimi they had made him sign a statement similar to the one which appeared in the newspaper article. I can therefore state, sir, that I acted within my rights, and that in the future, under similar circumstances, I shall act the same way. It matters little whether the Quebec Minister of Colonization approves of my conduct, I shall act as in the past.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

Mr. GORDON: I desire to lay on the table of the house certain orders in council passed pursuant to the relief legislation.

QUESTIONS

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk).

RAYON INDUSTRIES

Mr. SPENCER:

1. Are the rayon industries in Canada subsidized by the government in any way?
2. If so, to what extent?
3. What profits or dividends have been declared by rayon or celanese products corporations from the years 1928 to 1932, inclusive?
4. What is the scale of wages paid to men and women employed in these industries?
5. How many hours constitute a worker's week in this industry?
6. What percentage of these products are used for military purposes?
7. How much did the Canadian government buy from these firms from 1928 to 1932, inclusive?
8. Can rayon factories be turned into munitions factories in case of war?

Mr. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that apparently there is an idea abroad in this house that questions may be asked which can be answered only by the government writing to the people concerned.

[M. Duguay.]

This could be done just as well by the member as by the officials of the government. The fourth question concerns the scale of wages paid to men and women employed in these industries. This is a matter of provincial legislation as well as of contract between the employee and the company and all the government could do would be to write a letter and ascertain what the scale might be. The same could be said of the next question dealing with the worker's week in the industry. This is purely a provincial matter. The custom of asking the government to send out communications to various people in different parts of Canada in order to answer questions is not what is needed to take up the time of parliament.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, I agree largely with the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) in what he has just said regarding questions which relate to private industries and the obtaining of information by the government when such information can be obtained just as easily by members of parliament, but I should like to know whether the right hon. gentleman's remarks extend to the giving of information with respect to matters related to bodies immediately under the control of the government. I refer particularly, for example, to harbour commissions and bodies of that sort which operate indirectly if not directly under a department of government.

Mr. BENNETT: As the leader of the opposition had occasion, I think, to indicate some years ago, the truth is that with respect to some of the operations of harbour commissions and other bodies of that character which receive money from the government, the government can exercise some control, being compelled to give approval of certain matters before contracts are entered into, but in what one might call the ordinary administrative side of the question, the government has not any more control of the matter than has someone on the street. I did not, however, in the observations I made a few moments ago dealing with the type of questions to which I referred, intend to deal with those bodies at all. The policy of the government has been immediately to send to the bodies affected the questions that have been asked and to seek from them replies which it tables in the house as indicating the best information available with respect to such questions, and we shall continue to do that.

Mr. SPENCER: It will be satisfactory to me if the government cannot give the information. I simply withdraw questions 3, 4 and 5.