

Report of Committees

committee. Again it seems to me, and I believe that precedent will support my view, that the conduct of a witness can be considered by the House only on receiving a report thereon from a committee and the consideration, as I said a moment ago, of a motion to concur in the report with the required 48 hours notice.

Finally, there is the question of the extent of the power of a committee to send for papers. Hon. members are aware, of course, of the Standing Order to which the hon. member has referred and of the practice of the House. Hon. members know that a committee has the power to send for persons, papers and records. The fundamental question is whether a committee, without reference and submission to the House, has the authority to exercise that power in every case.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), in his question of privilege, suggests that the House should study immediately the problem posed by the refusal of CIDA's president to produce a certain document to the committee.

Can the committee, on its own, without reporting officially to the House, take any coercive steps against the witness? Can the committee, on its own authority, conclude in judgment: Down with Gérin-Lajoie? The Chair will have to think about it seriously.

[English]

For the moment, I think it would be the sense of the House that, rather than embark on an extended debate on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Greenwood, the Chair should be given an opportunity to reflect on the matter, taking into account the representations of the hon. member and the precedents, and then give a ruling later, perhaps tomorrow.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

First report, in both official languages, of Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.—Mr. Lachance.

Mr. Bécharde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine on a point of order.

Mr. Bécharde: Mr. Speaker, we did not hear the chairman of the committee as our electronic device was not working.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Lafontaine may want to repeat the motion he made a moment ago when no one heard him.

Mr. Lachance: Yes, Mr. Speaker, provided the green light of the microphone lights up.

[Mr. Speaker.]

First report, in both official languages, of Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence—Mr. Lachance.

HEALTH, WELFARE AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Fourth report, in both official languages, of Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs—Mr. Isabelle.

[Editor's Note: For texts of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

* * *

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

FAILURE OF BENEFICIARIES TO PICK UP CHEQUES AT EMERGENCY CENTRES DURING POSTAL STRIKE—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 43 to seek the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity. It is based on the fact that some 29,000 people, about 60 per cent of the claimants in the Metro Toronto area, as well as some 1,500 claimants in the Ottawa area and 472 in Hamilton, did not pick up their cheques which were available at emergency offices set up during the postal strike, all of which seriously questions the effectiveness and intent of the Unemployment Insurance Act as presently drafted to deal with possible abuse and misuse.

I move, seconded by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath):

That this House instruct the Minister of Manpower and Immigration forthwith to give reasons in detail why he has not instituted a full inquiry under the Inquiries Act calling for an attendance at all the said emergency offices in order to investigate all circumstances surrounding the non-acquisition of benefit cheques by claimants, with specific instructions to report back outlining conclusions and recommendations, and further to give reason why no inquiry under the said act has been instituted in order to determine:

- (a) whether fears about abuse and misuse under the Unemployment Insurance Act are justified;
- (b) whether there are disincentives to work built into the present Unemployment Insurance Act and, if so, what can be done to remove or reduce them;
- (c) whether the Unemployment Insurance Act is an insurance plan in reality, a welfare plan, or a combination of both to which contributions are simply a new kind of tax;
- (d) the relationship between high unemployment insurance benefits, high job vacancy rates and high unemployment.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair takes the liberty, for the future guidance of hon. members, to suggest that it takes exception to the form of the hon. member's motion. That having been said, the House is invited to determine whether there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I gather there is disagreement.