

*Inquiries of the Ministry***MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 26****LABOUR CONDITIONS****LAY-OFFS BY GENERAL MOTORS—EFFECT ON CANADIAN ECONOMY**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), to move the adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the announced lay-off of 2,000 employees by General Motors of Canada in Oshawa, Scarborough, Ste. Therese, St. Catharines and Windsor and the implications thereof for the Canadian economy in an industry which was expected to benefit from the recent United States economic measures.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) has filed the notice required by Standing Order 26. The hon. member proposes that the order of business be set aside for the purpose of discussing a lay-off by General Motors of Canada and, to quote the hon. member's words, the implications thereof for the Canadian economy.

The Standing Order sets out the factors which have to be considered by the Chair in determining whether a specific matter should be debated in priority to the previously announced business. I recognize, as do all hon. members, that the matter raised by the hon. member is one which is important, urgent, and of national interest. The procedural prerequisites in this respect are amply met. The Chair must consider other factors, however, and one of these is opportunity for debate. The House has had before it for a few days the tax bill, and more particularly the amendment which refers in broad terms to economic conditions in the country. Problems such as the one raised by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby have already been the subject of discussion in the course of this debate under the umbrella of the amendment now under consideration. That order of business is still before the House and it should be reasonable to assume that it will be called again. That debate in my view does provide an opportunity for the consideration of the situation on which the motion is based. I regret to conclude that the motion should not be put at this time.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**LABOUR CONDITIONS****LAY-OFFS BY GENERAL MOTORS—POSSIBLE TRANSFER OF JOBS TO THE UNITED STATES**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in respect of the lay-off to which reference has been made. Can the minister tell the House whether he or the government intends to conduct an inquiry into this matter or whether the minister is

[Mr. Gibson.]

really satisfied in his own mind that either General Motors has in fact a legitimate problem of over-production on the one hand or whether, on the other hand, the company is reacting to the program of President Nixon and as a result is transferring jobs to the United States.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I must confirm that these lay-offs will be taking place. For how long, I do not know. The reason given by the company in the communiqué, I understand, as I have not seen it, is the importance of imports from overseas. This is one aspect of it. I am sure there is also another aspect. It is that General Motors does not produce in Canada the popular compacts and sub-compacts produced by other Canadian manufacturers and imported from overseas. The cars produced now in Canada by General Motors are mostly full-sized Pontiacs and Chevrolets, and these have not been as popular in Canada or the United States as was expected, so the company is going through a period of adjustment now. General Motors has announced these 2,000 lay-offs in Canada but I am informed they have also announced the lay-off of 27,000 people in the United States. Tomorrow I will be seeing some of the top officers of the company and will try to find out as much as possible about Canadian interests in these matters.

● (4:10 p.m.)

LAY-OFFS BY GENERAL MOTORS—PRIOR NOTICE BY COMPANY

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I take it from what the minister has said that he had no prior warning of this lay-off, that there was no prior consultation between the company and officers of his own department and that there were no discussions yesterday on this subject between himself and U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Stans?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, we have established very good relations with the manufacturers of automobiles in Canada and, generally speaking, they keep me and my department well informed on these matters. They did give us advance notice of the 535 or 570 lay-offs at St. Thérèse, but I must say—and I regret having to say it—they did not give us any prior notice of these latest announced lay-offs in addition to the ones at St. Thérèse. I find that rather annoying and I hope this is an accident which will not occur again.

LAY-OFFS BY GENERAL MOTORS—GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PREVENT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): As a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister whether he has any plan in mind to avoid this lay-off by GM and, if so, whether he can indicate briefly to the House what this might be.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, this is the sort of subject I intend to take up tomorrow with the officers of the company, but I am rather hesitant to deal with the