

Inquiries of the Ministry

whether the minister might be able to report on progress being made on pollution in the Athabasca River and Lake system as well?

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that is not a supplementary but the question having been asked, perhaps the minister might like to reply.

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): I understand that officials from several departments are co-operating on this problem as well, Mr. Speaker.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**TORONTO—FACILITIES FOR PAYMENT OF BENEFITS**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): I have a question for the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker. In view of a possible impending postal crisis and in view of complaints that workers are being herded like cattle at the Moss Park Armouries in Toronto to receive their unemployment insurance benefits, will the minister give consideration to the use of the facilities at the Canada Manpower Centres in the Toronto area for the issuing of these benefits?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his customary courtesy in giving me notice earlier in the week that he intended to raise this question. The problem, of course, is that because of the rotating strikes we have endeavoured to continue our service to people who normally receive unemployment insurance payments by mail. The choice of the armouries, which may have been an unhappy one as far as conditions are concerned, was predicated upon location and size because of the admittedly large number of unemployed people in the Toronto area. I have taken into consideration the suggestion made by the hon. member that we use other government facilities, namely the Canada Manpower Centres. We have come to the conclusion that they are not large enough. However, as a result of the hon. member's suggestion we are searching in the general area for accommodations that are more suitable and through which the unemployed can receive their unemployment insurance with the dignity to which they are entitled.

HAMILTON—ALLEGED USE OF POSTAL CRISIS AS REASON FOR DELAY IN PROCESSING CLAIMS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is [Mr. Yewchuk.]

the minister in receipt of a telegram from the President of Local 2868, United Steelworkers, in Hamilton to the effect that untold hardship is being experienced by hundreds of employees of International Harvester in Hamilton as a result of the Unemployment Insurance Commission using the postal crisis to delay unemployment insurance claims due to intermittent mass lay-offs? Would the minister look at the Hamilton area in order to ascertain whether it is possible to find some means to get rid of these delays?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I will look into the matter, without accepting the interpretation of the hon. gentleman as to what the telegram contains.

BRITISH COLUMBIA—ACTION TO CLEAR UP BACKLOG OF CLAIMS

Mr. Paul St. Pierre (Coast Chilcotin): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister advise what action, if any, his department is taking to clear up the very serious backlog of unemployment insurance cases in British Columbia which has arisen from the strike?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that we should not at this time attempt to deal with all the provinces and communities of Canada. That would perhaps lead to some difficulty because there are only 40 minutes at our disposal. Perhaps hon. members who have supplementaries along that line would get in touch directly with the minister so that we might make some progress during the question period. I know this is an important matter, but perhaps we should go on to other subjects.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I admit that Your Honour's point is well taken but surely, since this matter affects thousands of people, particularly in the metropolitan areas, it should be raised in the House of Commons. The minister has indicated—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has asked a question which I realize is important and I believe he received an answer. The hon. member for Hamilton West did the same. We are now reaching British Columbia, and if we worked our way back to Newfoundland we would need more than the 40 minutes at our disposal. In fact, now we have much less time than that.