

Inquiries of the Ministry

delays in claims and the chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Commission made a statement, not too long ago, to the effect that only 88 per cent of those people who were applying for benefits were receiving them. The minister recently made another statement, after a very short spot-check, about how many claims were being delayed. None of the statements made previously are the same as the one made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration this morning. I think the House deserves clarification of how the parliamentary secretary has arrived at the figure he has given this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The submission made by the hon. member is an interesting one but I think it is really a question of debate. A discrepancy in information supplied to the House cannot, by long-established practice, be raised by way of a question of privilege. I am sure there will be an opportunity to consider the matter further. I see the parliamentary secretary would like to reply to the question raised by the hon. member but I suggest that the matter should not be pursued by way of privilege and that we should attempt to pursue the question period which is quickly running out of time.

Mr. Coates: I have a further question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. What I am concerned about is that the House and the people of Canada are being misled by this figure and I do not think the matter should be allowed to stand in that way.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That clearly is not privilege and I have to make that ruling. I would hope that the matter would not be pursued on that basis. I appeal to hon. members that if we spend all of our time on one important matter or on points of order or questions of privilege, which are also important matters that cannot be set aside easily, we will not, I think, have a very helpful, effective and fruitful question period this morning. I hope hon. members will co-operate with the Chair for their own benefit in this regard.

Mr. Perrault: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly, the point is that there has been no attempt here to mislead the House. The hon. member is speaking of two different sets of statistics.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Obviously the answer given by the parliamentary secretary indicates the extent to which I suggest, humbly, I was correct in suggesting this is a matter of debate. We could spend many minutes, hours and possibly days in debating what these figures mean. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby on a supplementary question.

REASON FOR REMOVAL OF UNPROCESSED CLAIMS FROM
QUEBEC TO BELLEVILLE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplementary for the parliamentary secretary. Is he aware that the world's finest unemployment insurance commission moved by automobile from Quebec yesterday 5,000 unprocessed claims to the city of Belleville to be processed and, if so, what does this indicate? Does it indicate that there is a complete break-

down in the province of Quebec in terms of UIC processing claims and, further, does it indicate that claims in the province of Ontario will be further delayed?

Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member also is aware of the fact that the commission processes 600,000 claims every two weeks and 98 per cent are on schedule.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize final supplementaries on this matter by the hon. member for Lotbinière and then the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants. Order, please. Apparently my voice did not carry through. I indicated I would recognize the hon. member for Lotbinière on a supplementary and I believe the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants also has a supplementary which will be the last one.

[Translation]

ALLEGED INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMISSION EMPLOYEES
NOT TO REVEAL REASONS FOR DELAYS IN PAYMENT OF
BENEFITS

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the parliamentary secretary.

Is it true that officials of the Unemployment Insurance Commission have instructed the Bathurst and other offices not to divulge the reasons for the delays in the payment of benefits?

[English]

Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): I have heard of no such report but certainly the question will be brought under review and consideration.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants will have the last supplementary.

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the parliamentary secretary. Since the new computer system created a miracle, namely, a letter to a male unemployed in Nova Scotia saying he was pregnant, could the new system be told nothing like this has happened since Adam gave birth to Eve?

Mr. Perrault: Mr. Speaker, incidents of this kind can be brought before the appropriate parliamentary committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Perrault: On behalf of the minister, may I welcome again a review and discussion of Unemployment Insurance Commission procedures by members of the standing committee.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for York South.