

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 20, 1977

The House met at 11 a.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION REORGANIZATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND
IMMIGRATION, ETC.

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-27, to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Mr. Speaker: There are some 33 report stage motions, and it has not been possible for me to survey all of them to determine whether or not there are any procedural concerns or, in any case, to attempt to group them for debate. For the moment, I have examined six such motions which I anticipated would keep the House busy long enough to give me an opportunity to examine the other 27 motions.

Of the first six motions, motion No. 1 gives me some concern about introducing into the clause which it seeks to amend a concept which is somewhat in respect of provincial consultation and, therefore, may be going beyond the scope of the clause which the motion seeks to amend. In a moment I will hear argument from the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) in whose name that motion stands, and any other hon. member who wants to argue the procedural question.

Motions Nos. 2 to 6 appear to be procedurally acceptable. Motions Nos. 2 and 3 could be grouped for discussion but would have to be voted separately. Motion No. 4 would be debated and voted on and separately. Motions Nos. 5 and 6 would be grouped for debate and voted on separately. If there is no comment or discussion on that, I would hope that that business would keep the House occupied for a short time.

In respect to the procedural questions on motion No. 1, I recognize the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander).

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West) moved motion No. 1:

That Bill C-27, An act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 5 by adding immediately after line 42 at page 2, the following new subclauses:

"(3) the minister shall consult with the provinces respecting the measures to be undertaken to facilitate the formulation, coordination and implementation of unemployment insurance and manpower policies and programs.

(4) The minister, with the approval of the governor in council may enter into an agreement with any province or group of provinces for the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of unemployment insurance and manpower policies and programs."

● (1110)

He said: Mr. Speaker, one now realizes how difficult it is for members of the opposition to become involved in significant debate. As I understand it, Bill C-27, which comprises amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act, was reported back to the House on Wednesday last. At that time one had no idea when the bill would be debated. Of course, it was up to our House leader on this side to ask the government House leader of the day, being the Postmaster General (Mr. Blais), what was the business for the following week. Lo and behold, we find the bill being debated this morning at 11 o'clock.

That is fine, Mr. Speaker, provided report stage reveals no amendments. But the minister himself has tabled at least ten amendments, some of them calling upon the Governor General since the expenditure of money is involved vis-à-vis the extended benefit period of from ten to 14 weeks. In addition to that, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus wanted to put down some amendments, and so did members of the NDP and the Social Credit party.

We now find ourselves in this difficult situation. We had to run like the very devil on Friday, firstly to acquire a copy of Bill C-27 as reported. I believe the bill itself as amended was not available to members until Friday. I know my hon. friends in the NDP will check me if I am wrong on that. Then, when we received the bill as amended, we had to gather our wits together and run helter-skelter around the place to get the necessary material and background to bring in some necessary amendments. We all scratched our heads and were able to do so, but the unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, is that you, yourself, on your own admission, did not have enough time to look at the amendments to see whether they were procedurally correct.

I am not blaming you for that, sir, because you have to follow the procedure that we set down for you. I blame the minister who wants to ram this bill through without giving proper opportunity to members to know what the bill is all about. Now that we are coming closer to the end of the month