

Supply—Labour

Mr. Starr: Yes. You are not the only one who is a member of the house.

Mr. MacEachen:—asking for this amount of money. If he did read this estimate, when did he expect that these sums would be required to replenish the fund? In July or August of this year? Or does he remember from his years of experience as a minister that the months when replenishment is required are April and May? If he read the supplementary estimates he must have realized at once that the fund was in need of replenishment for the months of April and May of this year. That is obvious.

Mr. Starr: May I ask the minister a question. Why did the minister and the government allow these supplementary estimates to stand for 25 days if the matter was urgent?

Mr. MacEachen: I think it was reasonable for me to expect that the supplementary estimates would be dealt with in this session, as they have been in former sessions; if they had been dealt with in this session as in former sessions this would have been passed by now, as my hon. friend knows.

Mr. Winkler: May I ask a question. What does the minister mean by "this session?"

Mr. MacEachen: My hon. friend need only refer to an elementary text to get a definition of the word "session". It is obvious that if the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre and the hon. member for Ontario had read the supplementary estimates they would have known that there was a requirement for a replenishment of the fund, and that the government was coming to the house for funds in the course of these supplementary estimates. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre had no difficulty in framing a question yesterday about this fund. His question was answered accurately. Every part of the answer was fully consistent one with another, and there was no effort to conceal any matter whatsoever. If hon. gentlemen opposite had wanted to find out about the fund, all they had to do was pick up a telephone any day of the week and call the unemployment insurance commission. Any of the commissioners would immediately have given my hon. friends the most recent available data on the fund.

Mr. Starr: It would have been 30 days old.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre and the hon. member for Ontario have read the budget papers. If they have they would have realized—the papers were tabled some weeks ago—that the state of the fund is as I stated tonight in my statement. They

would have realized that from reading the budget papers some weeks ago. We on the government side expect the opposition to do its homework and become informed from the information made available through documents tabled in the House of Commons.

Mr. Winkler: May I ask the minister a question. Did the minister understand, as we understood, that even if we had done that the passage of the supplementary estimates before last Thursday night was not necessary?

Mr. Pickersgill: What does that question mean?

Mr. MacEachen: I do not understand the question.

Mr. Winkler: Did the minister understand, as we did, that the passage of the estimates by last Thursday night before the recess was not necessary?

Mr. MacEachen: It was always evident to me that this supplementary estimate would have to be dealt with in order to replenish the fund for the months of April and May, and I suggest that any hon. member who had taken the trouble to read these supplementary estimates and the budget papers would have reached the same conclusion. That is why, when I was asked this question I answered it as a matter of course, and I was surprised that anyone else in the house should think that this information was novel or new in any way because it had already been made available in documents tabled in the house.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, may I ask another question so as to bring us up to date. Does the fund need to borrow money this week under the terms of this vote? In other words, is it now necessary that this vote be passed this week?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is necessary.

Mr. Winkler: That is what I wanted to know.

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member for Timiskaming raised a very important question with respect to the \$55 million which has been authorized in the past fiscal year. It will be recalled that last April and May the commission borrowed \$35 million on the strength of Governor General's warrants. Later on these Governor General's warrants were validated by the house through the supplementary estimates to which the President of the Privy Council made reference. Under that authority the commission received a total of \$35 million. It borrowed the money in April and May and it was repaid in June and July.