

Inquiries of the Ministry

even higher in the winter months which will soon be upon us. I draw attention to the effect of the present rate and of the forecast rate translated into terms of human misery. This is an urgent matter for all of us in this chamber. We should set aside all our business and consider solutions to this grievous problem of unemployment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: As required by the Standing Order the hon. Leader of the Opposition has provided me with the appropriate notice. This has afforded me an opportunity to give serious consideration to the important question for which discussion the adjournment of the House is desired at this time.

Perhaps I should say at once that the Chair fully appreciates the importance of the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I know it is one which is of concern to all members of this House. In deciding, however, whether or not leave to make a motion under Standing Order 26 should be granted, the Chair must have recourse to the conditions set forth in the Standing Order itself as well as to the precedents and practices which govern motions of this kind. I have thought about this matter very carefully. As has been stated before from the Chair, the test of urgency and, indeed, of emergency, must be met as distinct from the question of the importance of the topic. The Chair must also take into account the explicit language of the Standing Order, which refers to "the probability of the matter being brought before the House within a reasonable time by other means."

I think it fair to assume that an opportunity of this nature will arise within the next few days and on these two grounds, and with regret, I must decline to accept the motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition at the present time.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

PUBLIC SERVICE

POLICY RESPECTING UNILINGUAL EMPLOYEES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the assurance given by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, that inability to speak both official languages would not prejudice the careers of unilingual Canadians, particularly those of

[Mr. Stanfield.]

long service, in the Public Service is still valid, binding and in effect?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the policy, as originally enunciated in 1966 by the Right Hon. Mr. Pearson and subsequently repeated by myself, is still government policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the statement made by the chairman of the Public Service Commission that the careers of some long-time public servants have been and are being prejudiced, has the government any measures to propose to ensure that the commitment given by his predecessor and repeated by himself today is, in fact, being observed, bearing in mind that it was in the context of this commitment and this assumption that the official languages bill was adopted in this House?

Mr. Trudeau: Did I understand the Leader of the Opposition to say that the chairman of the Public Service Commission had stated that careers were prejudiced?

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Trudeau: That is not my own understanding, but at any rate nothing which the commission has been doing, as far as I can see, has been a departure from government policy. At this stage I can only express my confidence in the way in which the commission is handling a very difficult job.

Mr. Stanfield: I might refer the Prime Minister to the remarks made by the chairman of the commission on television and ask him now whether the government has given the Secretary of State responsibility for implementing the bilingual policy in the Public Service. Could the Prime Minister also tell us whether the government has given the Secretary of State and his department any terms of reference with regard to honouring the commitment made by the former Prime Minister, a commitment which the right hon. gentleman now says is still the policy of the government?

Mr. Trudeau: Those statements are the terms of reference of the Secretary of State who is applying that policy as enunciated by the previous government and as repeated by myself some time ago and again today.