

S.O. 43

● (1112)

YOUNG CANADA WORKS

REDUCTION OF PROGRAM—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. Since the Department of Employment has cut \$2.5 million from the Young Canada Works program, which seriously hurts young adult students from areas of Canada with far above average unemployment rates, and since the same department has now cut \$50 million from phase III of Canada Works as compared to phase II, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez):

That the officials of the Department of Employment be taken before the Canadian Human Rights Commission for discriminating against the needy.

Mr. Speaker: Presentation of such a motion for debate at this time, pursuant to Standing Order 43, would require the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Members will have noted, I am sure, that I did not put the question in respect of the motion proposed, pursuant to Standing Order 43, by the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. Lavoie). The reason I did not do so was that I have consistently refrained from using the provisions of Standing Order 43 in order to issue salutary messages of any sort. It seems to me that to use the motion in that way—and I am certainly prepared to be consulted if I am wrong in this approach—would be a temptation to use a motion for various messages of congratulation all of which are praiseworthy but surely are not matters of urgent and pressing necessity within the language of the Standing Order.

It seems to me if we are going to open the use of that motion for one kind of congratulatory message, we must be prepared to take, on a daily basis, motions pursuant to that Standing Order in respect of birthdays of cities and of provinces or in respect of various historic events and congratulatory messages. I have consistently refrained from doing that. I have listened to the motions and it seems to me that hon. members who put them forward enjoy the opportunity of doing so. However, the Chair has never put the question to the floor as to whether there is a matter of necessity requiring unanimous consent for debate. I really think if I start doing that, we must be prepared to accept a great flow of this kind of motion and I think that should be resisted. That is the reason for that approach this morning.

Again I say that if members want to speak to me about a change of policy in that regard, I would be only too glad to take it under consideration.

[Mr. Speaker.]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION SUPPLIED TO RCMP

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the Minister of Employment and Immigration back to the very important topic I asked him about on Wednesday. It is a matter that affects all Canadians and the degree of confidence they can have in their dealings with their government. I have carefully read the answer given me by the minister on Wednesday. I want to ask, again, specifically what information his department has been in the habit of supplying the RCMP from confidential files.

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, there is a specific provision in the act which in fact allows information from the files to be made available for particular purposes. There is also a discretionary factor in section 114, which was amended, as you know, under the new act. There was some concern about whether the discretion that could be applied was directly related to the act itself and to social insurance numbers. The legal opinion I received was that this, in fact, was the case.

Given that situation, it was no longer possible to give information to the RCMP which would help with its investigations of criminal activity. The kind of information involved would obviously be names, addresses and names of employers, the information that is in the file.

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the evidence given to the royal commission is that the Unemployment Insurance Commission, on hundreds of occasions since 1974, has given information to the RCMP. When did this government decide to ignore the assurances given by former prime minister Pearson in 1964, when the social insurance scheme was first introduced, that this information would be held strictly confidential, not to be used for any other purpose but for internal unemployment insurance purposes?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the interpretation which has been given to that particular section is, as I have said, somewhat fuzzy and subject to interpretation, namely, that there is a discretionary power, formerly in the commission and now with the minister, to make that information available; so there was no feeling that there was, in fact, any illegality or any breach of that particular statute.

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Because of recent events and, particularly, my own responsibility as minister, I sought and obtained a legal opinion to the effect that my discretion could only be exercised in a very narrow area in so far as the Unemployment Insurance Act is concerned. There is no feeling that there has been any illegality. It was an interpretation that was taken, I gather, by former commissioners that they in fact had this authority.