

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 1, 1972

The House met at 11 a.m.

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LAMBERT (BELLECHASSE)—DELAY IN FORWARDING OF COMMUNIQUÉS FROM MINISTERS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to remedy a situation and inform you that I particularly care about certain privileges.

Yesterday, during the oral question period, I put a question to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) concerning the steps the government intends to take to help the Quebec farmers who, because of poor weather conditions, are having a hard time storing the feed required for their herds over the winter months. The minister replied that the details of the assistance program had been sent to my office.

Mr. Speaker, I regret having to tell the minister that had I received the release on cash subsidies before the sitting yesterday, as several other members did, I should have been informed in good time. But I received it this morning only; that is why I protest and ask that steps be taken to ensure, in the future, that such important releases be sent to my office in good time.

I wish to add that I am happy the contents of the release prove that the minister took into account the representations I made to him; that I was happy to hear about it even on September 1 instead of August 31.

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

AMOUNT OF GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO ACCOUNT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration arising out of the fact that Statistics Canada no longer publishes the contributions made to the unemployment insurance fund and has not done so since December 31, 1971. Will the minister disclose to the House the amount of the contributions that the government is being called upon to make to the unemployment insurance account compared with the estimates produced by the government during the budget debate?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman is quite accurate in saying—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: He will be "right honourable" in two months.

Mr. Mackasey:—that Statistics Canada no longer publishes the revenue that the government receives from the Unemployment Insurance Commission. That cannot be done until next April. Members on that side of the House who were on the committee should know that the revenue from offsetting factors such as contributions and income tax is now collected by the Department of National Revenue and that revenue is to be turned over to the Unemployment Insurance Commission next April. There are other offsetting factors such as welfare savings. In a spirit of co-operation I could suggest that one of the deliberate increases in cost to the fund was the change in the regulations to improve the lot of the fishermen in Newfoundland to the tune of \$18 million. I could change that back again if that would suit the hon. gentleman.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants to have a debate he can do so on motions and we will be very happy to take part in it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister whether he really cannot give us the information required in view of the fact that an estimate was made of the government contribution at the time the budget papers were tabled in the House? Does the minister mean to indicate that there is no estimate in his hands or in the hands of the government today as to the projected contribution that the government will make toward unemployment insurance during the current fiscal year in comparison with the estimates set forth in the budget papers?

• (1110)

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the paid-outs that are made from the fund are subject to certain variables, one of them being the relationship between payments and the weekly wage of people unemployed. The payment is now \$66 a week. I do not think that is too much for any unemployed person. Maybe the hon. gentleman thinks it is. We could save by cutting down on that. We know what our payments are—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the minister resume his seat for a moment. It seems to me that we are embarking on a debate between the minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Perhaps we should try to return for a moment to the question and answer period.