

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

to the whole cigarette question is now under active consideration by the government and I expect to be in a position to make an announcement on it fairly soon.

**Mr. Speaker:** Orders of the day.

[Translation]

## POST OFFICE

## POSSIBLE NATIONAL STRIKE—DELIVERY OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CHEQUES

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Abitibi on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Laprise:** Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege is related to the question I put to the Acting Prime Minister earlier this afternoon about distribution of unemployment insurance benefits.

The minister made no reply yesterday to the same question, put at that time by the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte). In view of the great need of these payments by those who are unemployed in order to cope with their day-to-day expenses, and since at eleven o'clock this morning no decision had been arrived at in unemployment insurance offices in order to avoid the effects of a possible Post Office strike, again I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether consideration is being given to measures concerning the distribution of these benefits and aimed at easing communications between the unemployed and officials in unemployment insurance offices?

**Mr. Speaker:** I doubt very much whether this is a bona fide question of privilege. However, perhaps the House would allow the Acting Prime Minister to answer the question as asked by the hon. member for Abitibi.

[English]

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, you were correct in your recollection that a similar question had been asked. I said—and perhaps my answer was misunderstood—that we had found it possible to distribute the old age pension cheques, for example, in advance; there seemed no other way of distributing the money. But when it came to the question of unemployment insurance, we examined what could be done and concluded that the matter could be dealt with

[Mr. Munro.]

more satisfactorily by other means. If I can get further details I will be glad to report to the hon. member.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Annapolis Valley on a point of order.

**Mr. Nowlan:** I have really two points of order to raise, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to get to the Secretary of State. It is the first time we have both been in the House at the same time. But I will not put that question now because we have gone beyond the oral question period.

I was hoping to direct a supplementary question to the hon. member for Etobicoke, the vice-chairman of the Finance Committee. I hoped he would reply to the question I put to him about his proposals, which are most interesting and constructive. Were they put to the Minister of Finance and, if so, what was his reply?

**Mr. Speaker:** The questions asked by the hon. member, both the original question and the supplementary, may be very interesting but he will recognize that it is not in order for a member to address a question of this nature to the chairman of a committee. If the hon. member will look at the precedents, and they are ample, he will see that the only questions which are acceptable when directed to the chairman of a committee are questions which relate to procedural matters—whether a meeting is to be held, whether a committee will be convened, at what time a committee will be held, and so on; certainly not whether the chairman of a committee has conveyed to a member of the government or of the executive certain recommendations or decisions. Perhaps the hon. member might wish to ask, when he has an opportunity, whether the minister has received such a communication from the chairman of a committee. But he cannot ask the chairman of a committee whether he has communicated with a minister in this connection.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, sympathize and more or less agree with your ruling, but the dilemma in my mind was whether the hon. member for Etobicoke was making his pronouncements as an official of the committee or as an individual member. This goes to the work of the committee.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I cannot agree with the hon. member's very liberal interpretation of the rules in this respect. I think the question period can get a little complicated if we involve not only members of the cabinet