

question period have been waiting for an opportunity to do so. This matter might be pursued tomorrow.

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PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH— REQUESTED EXTENSION OF APPLICATION DEADLINE

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Ontario): I have a question for the Secretary of State. In view of the fact that public service employment opportunities for Canadian youth were announced on January 13 and that the closing date for applications under this program was January 31, some 18 days later, would the minister approach the Public Service Commission to see if this date can be extended so as to afford more of our youth an opportunity to apply under this program?

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to accept the hon. member's suggestion and to seek the advice of the Public Service Commission on the possibility of such a procedure.

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[English]

YOUTH

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM—SUGGESTED INQUIRY INTO POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND MINIMUM WAGE REGULATIONS—REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the Secretary of State in an agreeable and accepting mood. In view of statements over the weekend with regard to possible political influence in the allocation of programs and the other charge that there may be some real difficulties between the minimum wage regulations of the federal government and the wage allocations under the Opportunities for Youth program, I wonder whether the minister has initiated an inquiry or whether one will be initiated? May I also ask the minister, in order to avoid putting a supplementary question to him, whether he would now be prepared, in view of the evaluation of last year's program and the other youth programs, to have a youth committee established by the House in order that it could look into all these questions with some thoroughness?

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, there are three separate questions in the hon. member's question, and I will need some time to reply to all three. I therefore beg your patience in spite of the late hour.

My reply to the first part of the question is that in view of the extremely serious nature for a public servant of the statements reported by the press and, in many instances, of their glaring inaccuracy, the hon. member will no doubt understand our making an inquiry in order to ascertain whether the reports have any basis and whether the official concerned really made those statements.

With regard to the second part of the question, the matter is under study. The position we took last year, and which we will maintain unless the study indicates otherwise, is that the project sponsors, not the government or the Department of the Secretary of State, are the employers. Moreover, this work is comparable to voluntary work.

As for the establishment of a special committee on matters relating to youth, or referral to a parliamentary committee which would be responsible for dealing with such questions, I am quite prepared to accept the hon. member's suggestion. However, I do not know whether we should establish a special committee or whether it might be preferable for this matter to be referred to one of the standing committees of the House of Commons already in existence.

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[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—REQUEST FOR IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATION

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order not with respect to the answer of the Secretary of State but with respect to earlier questions put to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration and the comments he made last week and again today. The importance of the questions being raised with regard to unemployment insurance affects so many people that I know all members of the House have also been affected. In view of the extended debate on the Speech from the Throne I am wondering whether the government House leader, because of the almost unanimous concern of all members concerning unemployment insurance and its operation, would give consideration—perhaps he might consult with the parliamentary secretary and others—to having an immediate reference without debate, which I am sure all members would support, to establish this committee at once in order that it could give immediate consideration to the matter because many thousands of Canadians have been affected.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has no objection to the minister replying briefly to this question. It is a question and hardly a point of order. In fairness to the hon. member and to the House, the minister might be allowed to reply briefly.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): I will examine the proposition to determine whether any substantial time would be gained by having a reference in that way rather than waiting for the sending of the estimates to the standing committees.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.