

### *Unemployment Insurance*

since I am sure there is a desire to clean up some business before the Easter recess, I wonder whether, by unanimous consent and without debate, this motion could be put.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Is the hon member for Hamilton West rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I may be out of order in view of the fact that the report by the unemployment insurance advisory committee that is to be tabled has not yet been tabled, and therefore if there is a point of privilege to be raised it may have to be raised after the paper has been duly tabled.

I have just been advised by the hon. member of the NDP who is the spokesman in terms of the rules that the document has been tabled. My point of privilege is this, and I think it is one that affects all members of the House. As far as I am concerned, the directive that went out to the advisory committee of the Unemployment Insurance Commission gave instructions in no uncertain terms to look into allegations of questionable conduct, abuses of procedure and harassment of claimants. I have not had this report too long, but as I read it it seems to me that the advisory committee has not done a job that I can find acceptable without raising a question of privilege. Let me refer the House to the second last page on which it is stated:

● (1500)

The committee has, therefore, completed its review of the benefit control program, based on the evidence received from the officers of the head office of the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

I would now refer to page 1 of this document. I am embarrassed inasmuch as I do not want to quibble with those who have attempted to discharge their duties, but it appears to me, and I use this phrase advisedly, an attempt is being made to perpetrate a whitewash job on this House this afternoon.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Alexander:** On page 1 of the report we find this statement:

The committee convened in Ottawa on March 13, 1973 and again on March 19, in Montreal to interview and examine various officials of the head office of the Unemployment Insurance Commission in order to review the procedure carried out by its benefit control branch and to touch briefly on related matters.

This whole matter came about as a result of problems that existed in the city of Toronto, but I do not see the city of Toronto mentioned in this report. The three referees in the city of Toronto were primarily the ones who made this complaint, and it is in that area where the trouble began.

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Alexander:** Just a minute. I am speaking to a question of privilege, and I think I have a very good one because I say this is a whitewash job.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Alexander:** The minister stood in his place on several occasions when questions were raised in respect of

[Mr. Howard.]

particular areas of abuse and said the committee was looking into them. When reference was made to the city of Toronto and the complaints of the three umpires there, all appointees of labour, as I recall, the minister said the committee was looking into these matters.

On another occasion there was an incident drawn to the minister's attention in respect of a storefront social agency which had indicated that benefit control officers were using language that was detrimental to the claimants. The minister is shaking his head, but I recall very distinctly what happened.

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. While the hon. member is catching his breath, perhaps I might say a word or two. I have some doubt whether this is a question of privilege. The hon. member claims it is a good question of privilege. In my opinion the statement the hon. member is making to the House now is more the type of statement or comment made by hon. members following a ministerial statement being made to the House. Obviously, the hon. member is not satisfied with the contents of the document tabled by the minister. However, if there is a question of privilege the hon. member should indicate to the Chair as soon as possible in what way he thinks there is a question of privilege in order that the Chair may decide whether we ought to have a debate this afternoon on the point raised by the hon. member.

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, in terms of establishing a prima facie case of privilege before this House I must be allowed to continue. My question of privilege is based on the fact that the advisory committee has not discharged its responsibilities as contained in the terms of reference, unless I have badly misread those terms of reference.

If I have the consent of the Chair, I should like to direct the attention of the House to what is stated on page 2 of this report:

The discussions and interviews were open and frank and the Chairman and his officials are to be commended for their unreserved co-operation in answering all questions and providing up to date data and statistics.

Where is there any reference to the referees in Toronto who started this whole thing?

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Alexander:** That is what I am asking about, and those members over there can yell all they want. On page 5 of the report—

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**An hon. Member:** There has been no order in this place this year.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that he is not acting in conformity with the traditions of the House. I suggest that the hon. member has a grievance, legitimate or otherwise, and is using a question of privilege as a guise under which to make a speech on a point of substance to the House. If this were a rule of the House, I suggest to the hon. member for Hamilton West and all hon.