

Supply—Labour

straightforward answer. Then the Leader of the Opposition questioned the minister as follows:

Is it not correct that the fund is in such a position that the government will be able to provide the necessary assistance even if action is delayed for ten days? Is that not correct?

My right hon. friend was justified in asking that question, based on the answer given earlier by the Minister of Labour—"the fund will be able to bear its responsibilities within the next week or so".

Mr. McLraith: No, read the answer.

Mr. Churchill: I am going to read the answer. I am saying that the Leader of the Opposition was justified in asking the question he did, in view of the previous answer by the minister which I have just read. Let me repeat this. The Leader of the Opposition was assuming that everything would be all right for another ten days. But the Minister of Labour, being concerned, then answered as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to put this in a provocative way—

May I interrupt the quotation here and say I cannot understand why the Minister of Labour should follow the bad example set in this house by the minister of external affairs, that of using a great number of words when just two or three would suit his purpose. I suggest to him that if he is looking forward to his future he will select someone else in his group as an example. He went on to say:

—my information today is that unless the particular item is approved this week the commission will be in difficulty to make benefit payments by the end of the week.

Note the phrase "my information today". He did not know the day before. He did not know last week—

Mr. Pickersgill: Stick to the words he used.

Mr. Starr: Use your patience now; do not get excited.

Mr. Churchill: He spoke of the difficulty of making benefit payments. He did not say: The fund will be broke; we cannot get out the cheques. Finally, in a corner, the minister admitted that this item had to be passed in order that the cheques could be sent out this week. Why was that not said to us last week? Why could not the government have taken us into its confidence and admitted that this was the case? Why did they not say this was an essential item in the supplementary estimates?

But oh, no; there was concealment.

Mr. Pickersgill: It was just in the estimates, that's all. That is concealment, is it?

Mr. Starr: There was concealment. You just stuck the thing in and didn't tell the house about it.

Mr. Pickersgill: Can't you read?

Mr. Churchill: I am receiving quite a bit of assistance, Mr. Chairman. I do not require this assistance at all, with respect to people on both sides of the house. Why all this concealment? The acting prime minister—

Mr. Knowles: Which one?

Mr. Churchill: The Minister of Transport. He interjected and said that the item was in the estimates. Of course it was; we saw that. But why would the Minister of Labour say that the fund would be able to bear its responsibilities within the next week or so and then, within a minute and a half, say the item had to be passed this week? Either he does not know what is going on in his department or he was concealing facts from the house, and this is what we object to.

Mr. Pickersgill: How childish.

Mr. Churchill: Or else he was under the impression that some of the money that was made available by special warrants last year was still available. But the unemployment insurance commission would surely advise him as to what was required. However, Mr. Chairman, that is the situation. A full disclosure on the part of the government would have expedited the business of the house, but they kept this away from us.

The Minister of Finance was terribly afraid that the press might find out on Monday. What arrant nonsense. We are quite prepared, and would have been prepared last Thursday or earlier, to pass this item with regard to the unemployment insurance fund, because we naturally want, as does everybody in this house, people to receive benefits from this fund. But this is the treatment they have received from this government—just fumbling and bungling along. I think they are falling apart at the seams and are not long for this world.

Mr. Pigeon: It is the same old clique.

Mr. Webb: Mr. Chairman, I want to say immediately that I concur fully with the remarks of the hon. member for Timmins. Never have I, in five years, received anything like the mail that I am receiving today and have received in the last few months from applicants applying for unemployment insurance to which they are undoubtedly entitled. Each and every day these letters are arriving.

An hon. Member: How many?