

Prairie Grain Stabilization Act

pursued in depth and detail and the government held accountable for its behaviour. The question period is one of the few vehicles left. I am sure hon. members will be in agreement with extending the sitting day for a period of 15 minutes, 20 minutes or half an hour in order that the question period might be lengthened.

The roster system must be re-examined. Day after day members of the House of Commons are frustrated because they cannot ask questions on very urgent matters. This is also frustrating to their constituents. Members are not able to pursue matters through the ministerial heads of the various departments. The Prime Minister continues to pass the burden and responsibility for responding to the various ministers, even though they may not be in the House at that time.

I suggest that either a committee or the House leaders question the type of responses that members are getting from government ministers who answer for various departments. Despite the fact that members try to save time during the question period, out of frustration or because they are not as forward as they might be, I challenge any member to look through the 197 questions asked and show that the government has made a legitimate effort to respond to the needs of the people through their elected representatives. The hon. member for Egmont expressed frustration today. Other members are frustrated because we are not getting any indication of government responsibility from responses to questions asked during the question period by the elected representatives. This whole process has to be re-examined.

For Your Honour to be able to carry on in your usual competent fashion, and for members elected to represent their constituents to pursue matters as important and urgent as the economic affairs facing this country as well as local matters such as the one raised today by the hon. member for Vegreville, there has to be an early reassessment of the whole matter of the question period.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (3:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Joliette rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, it has just been mentioned that it might be possible to reconsider the business of the question period. In the interest of Parliament, I think it might be important if the meeting is going to take place—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Chair has heard the representations made by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan); they are directed to the party leaders who might hold a meeting to consider this suggestion in order to improve the daily work of the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Muir: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. It deals specifically with the replies, or lack of replies, received from the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. I stated when I posed a question earlier today that I had not given notice because of the fact I was quite sure

this hon. gentleman was well aware of what was taking place in this case, 800 people having been laid off from their place of employment. When the minister attempts to reply to questions we get "nothing" answers or we are told he will inquire. The other day someone used the phrase "Trudeau the shrugger". He is becoming Marchand the shrugger. He shrugs his shoulders and gives no answer.

Earlier this week my hon. friend from Central Nova posed a question about other lay-offs, having given the minister ample notice, some days notice. Again the minister said he would inquire. He had no answer. We face this situation time and time again. In fact, the minister informed me after that effort, following the question asked by my hon. friend from Central Nova, that if he were given notice answers would be forthcoming. This is untrue. It does not happen that way. My hon. friend from Central Nova gave notice several days before asking his question. It was not necessary to do that today.

We face a situation where 800 people have been placed on the unemployment rolls. They must suffer the degradation, as able-bodied men and women, of having to seek welfare. I agree with the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate. Despite our best efforts it has become impossible for us to ask questions in the House and get answers or, at least, honest efforts to reply. The Minister of Labour, the Minister of Justice, a few of those who sit on the treasury benches, are quite willing and happy to do the best they can and you know you are at least getting a sincere attempt to give a helpful answer. But I must lodge a strong protest with you, Mr. Speaker, and with the government, as to the activities which are taking place. Unemployment is rolling up into the hundreds of thousands, yet the government sits idly by and does nothing about it and will not even answer legitimate questions.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in connection with questions which were raised during the question period concerning the intention of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to hold a press conference at 3:30 this afternoon on the subject of his conversations with senior officials of General Motors Corporation. If there is unanimous agreement in the House, and I am sure there would be, I wonder whether the leader of the House would approach the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and ask him, in light of what took place during the question period, to reconsider his original intention and make his statement here before the House.

An hon. Member: Revert to motions.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PRAIRIE GRAIN STABILIZATION ACT

PROVISION FOR PAYMENTS TO WESTERN CANADA PRODUCERS IN YEARS WHEN RECEIPTS BELOW FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE

The House resumed, from Tuesday, September 21, consideration of Bill C-244, respecting the stabilization of prairie