

Inquiries of the Ministry

I trust this motion will receive more than the usual response.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has indicated the substance of his motion. The question is formally before the House. I have to inquire, of course, whether there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimity and the matter cannot be proceeded with at this time.

[Translation]

MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 26**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****DEALY IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—REMEDIAL MEASURES BY GOVERNMENT**

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to move, seconded by the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise), a motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the necessity for the government to take steps to consider and improve the Unemployment Insurance Commission performance which is several months behind in its payments to thousands of claimants.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has given notice required under Standing Order 26 and I have carefully considered the suggestion he made.

I of course recognize that this is an important matter and one of interest to all hon. members of this House. At the same time, I believe hon. members will recognize that it would not be easy to justify adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26 at the very moment when we have before us the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, more particularly today when it has already been determined by a special order of the House that we must, during the course of the day, hear the speeches of the four parties.

I feel, after due consideration, that I must reach the conclusion that it is not possible, at least today, to allow holding a special debate on the subject brought forward by the hon. member for Compton.

Manpower and Immigration, I should like to pose a question to the Prime Minister. I am sure that in view of the seriousness of the tragic delays in the payment of unemployment insurance claims the Prime Minister will be fully familiar with this subject. May I ask the right hon. gentleman whether he has caused inquiries to be made as to the reasons for these delays, and can he now give the House these reasons in order to explain the very serious delays that are taking place across the country?

Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, may I draw to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition that, though it is easy to criticize, it is indeed remarkable that an additional 1.2 million Canadians are covered by the new unemployment insurance plan. I further point out that 98.7 per cent of all claims are being processed on schedule, and that only a few days ago a news release was issued concerning the minister's investigation into the problem of delays. It was determined during the investigation that the principal reasons for the delays stemmed from three causes: First of all, a lack of employer records, a situation which is now, hopefully, being remedied; second, improperly filled in claims by claimants and, third, some problems within the Unemployment Insurance Commission. I would point out to the House—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Perrault:—that now less than 1 per cent of the claims are being delayed.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Let me remind the House at the very beginning that we have only a 40-minute question period. I would hope that each question would not be followed by a debate. The parliamentary secretary should not, in reply to a question, make a lengthy statement.

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the extraordinary complacency exhibited by the parliamentary secretary, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he personally is now prepared to investigate the reasons for this tragic inefficiency, resulting in tragic suffering by thousands and thousands of unemployed persons across this country. Is the Prime Minister himself prepared to investigate this matter?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the members sitting behind the hon. gentleman had permitted him to listen to the answer, he would have discovered that the reasons for the delays were given by the parliamentary secretary. Therefore there is no need for further investigation.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister seems to be so complacent about this subject, may I ask him whether he is prepared, in conjunction with the House leader, to arrange for the immediate establishment of the appropriate committee and for the reference of this whole subject to that committee for investigation, particularly in view of the suffering that is taking place across this country?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****DELAYS IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION BY COMMITTEE**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the regrettable absence of the Minister of

[Mr. Lundrigan.]