

*Supply—Labour*

through the years. Then on some other occasion we find that an item in the estimates that had legislative effect seems to be spent by the end of the fiscal year.

Actually we are being asked in the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year 1963-64 to extend the provisions of a supplementary estimate that was also passed in the fiscal year 1963-64. I refer to supplementary item L27a, which was in the supplementary estimates "A" for the fiscal year 1963-64, which authorized the making of loans by the Minister of Finance to the unemployment insurance fund up to an outstanding aggregate at any one time of \$55 million. There is nothing in the wording of the estimate L27a, which was finally passed the night we prorogued in December, that puts any time limit on the lending power provided in that estimate.

I would like to have either from the Minister of Labour, the Acting Minister of Finance or the Minister of Justice an explanation as to why this borrowing power ran out as of midnight last night, in view of the fact that there was no cut-off date in the wording of the estimate as it was passed last December. Was it because the full \$55 million had been lent, or is there some other reason? I think that even though this is a technical situation, it should be cleared up. The vote that is now before us does not provide any more money. The vote we had before us last December provided \$55 million and the authority to lend it. The vote tonight is merely for \$1, which is the legislative symbol, but no additional money is provided.

I think this whole question of the relationship between the \$55 million lending authority that we provided last December and the vote tonight should be made clear to us by the minister. If it is—and I assume it is—a fact that there is a legal requirement to get further lending power at this time, I think the minister should explain to us why he let this matter run down so close to the wire. If the government had authority yesterday to borrow money from the Minister of Finance for the unemployment insurance fund, and if there was some question as to when these estimates might get through, and if there was even some question as to whether Their Honours in the other place might stay here for such purposes as we call upon them, why did he run this risk? Why did he not borrow the money yesterday before the authority ran out at midnight last night? If I seem to be asking these questions in a critical vein, Mr. Chairman—and perhaps I intend to be critical in any case—it is because I think we should have an explanation so that we know what this is all about.

I can readily understand the concern of the hon. member for Ontario, though I am afraid I do not share his view that the matter

has been concealed. After all, it has been in the supplementary estimates that have been before us for two or three weeks, and if we did not see this item ourselves, some of the alert members of the press gallery saw it and came to us and warned us what it was all about; so we have known about this matter for some time. Therefore even though it was not concealed, in the sense that it was kept secret, I think we do have a complaint that the government did not tell us the importance of this item at one of the times when we were making arrangements for the business of this house. I think the government should have told us it was planning to go down to the wire and let the unemployment insurance fund become almost empty, and were running the risk of parliament not passing this supplementary estimate; and if the senators did not stay here to give royal assent to the bill, they were running the risk of letting the fund be emptied some time this week or next week.

I think it is unfortunate that even in one night's news, as it happened last night, the alarm was spread across Canada that unemployment insurance benefits might not be payable because of this complicated situation. Perhaps more needs to be said as we go along, Mr. Chairman, but I think the main impression that should be created by tonight's debate and by the passing of this item is that this alarm can be set aside; that the fund will have money to pay the claims. But I think to this house, to parliament, the minister and the government owe an explanation. When the minister is making that explanation perhaps he will tell us at the same time what the government's plans are at this session with respect to amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act or, perchance, to a complete overhaul of that act. He will recall that when we were discussing his main estimates last November, we asked for certain things to be done at this session. He gave us a list of priorities, of certain things that were sure to be done and certain things that he would try to get done. I believe an overhaul of the Unemployment Insurance Act was one of the things promised for this session. However, it was not in the speech from the throne and so far we have not seen any legislation with respect to this matter. Surely if the fund is in this precarious position it is time that this promised overhaul of the Unemployment Insurance Act was proceeded with. As I say, Mr. Chairman, we want the main impression tonight to be one of certainty so far as the unemployment insurance fund is concerned; this is what the public must learn from what happens