

The minister replied:

Yes, that is right.

We are now discussing a bill which is indeed very short. I am used to criticizing the inordinate length of some bills which thus tend to be incomprehensible. Unfortunately, we are taking days to deal with Bill C-124. This procedure enabled some hon. members who spoke before—and I followed the debates in the House—to comment on the whole unemployment insurance legislation.

We shall have an opportunity to discuss the Unemployment Insurance Act when another bill dealing with it is brought forward. We shall then discuss the initial period, the waiting period, the reference period and the extension period and also the two kinds of unemployment, casual and hard-core or chronic unemployment. However, today we are dealing with a bill to enable the commission to pay benefits to unemployed people. It has been hard enough, since the beginning of the winter, to accelerate such payments without adding to that the creation of an atmosphere of hesitation among civil servants.

In view of the many delays unemployed people have been having in receiving their benefits, we should not add to that the encouraging of a hesitant attitude.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom)—Agriculture—Possibility of financial assistance to Saskatchewan land bank program; the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Whittaker)—Public Works—Alleged disposal of old barges by Department in Lake Okanagan—Steps to remove; the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight)—Agriculture—Increase in price of fertilizer—Inquiry as to action.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely public bills, private bills and notices of motions.

National Housing Act

[English]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

AMENDMENTS CONCERNING MUNICIPAL WATER AND SOIL ANTI-POLLUTION PROJECTS

On the order: Public Bills:

January 15, 1973—Second Reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs of Bill C-6, an act to amend the National Housing Act (Municipal Water and Soil Pollution Projects)—Mr. Alexander.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Hon. members will recall that on January 18 Mr. Speaker made some reference to Bill C-6, and it was to the effect that the bill contained money provisions. Of course, if the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) has any further explanation to offer, or has any further information to give, the Chair will certainly take the time required to pay attention to what he has to say.

• (1700)

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate the dilemma in which Bill C-6 has placed the Chair. But I believe it is the substance of the bill which should most concern us, and that is what I should like to bring to Your Honour's attention.

Bill C-6 is an act to amend the National Housing Act. It is concerned with municipal soil and water anti-pollution projects. A great deal of urgency attaches to it because of the rate of urban growth and corresponding problems related to sewage disposal arrangements. I know that when the bill was first brought to the attention of the Chair a caveat was expressed; it was pointed out that I was dealing with a matter involving the financial prerogatives of the Crown. This is something which immediately comes to the attention of the Chair in cases in which a bill originates with a private member. In other words, the Chair itself scrutinizes private members' bills to see that they comply with the rules, and, where justified, in the Speaker's opinion, initiates objections and rules a bill to be out of order.

I do not object to this practice. What I do object to is the fact that such initiative is not exercised by the Chair in the case of public bills, including those introduced by a minister of the Crown. Obviously, the Chair does not exercise this initiative where government bills are concerned. I need only refer to the Government Organization Bill, 1970, one which really contained about eight bills which should have been split. In this case the initiative, the raising of the point of order, was not undertaken by the Chair, but by Members of the Opposition. Again, in connection with the Income Tax Reform Bill, at least two points of order were initially raised by the Official Opposition, one of them so vital that the legislation could have been blocked for weeks while the Chair perused its contents, perhaps with the result that the measure would have been thrown out. The other defect was so serious that a special order of the House was required before the bill could proceed. There are other precedents in this connection, but the two I have mentioned are recent. And