

Seasonal Unemployment

employed it might not fall within this Standing Order. But I do make the point that it is possible for a minister to lay on the table a report or paper dealing with the administrative responsibilities of the government, and thereupon the same shall be deemed for all purposes to have been laid before the House.

When this standing order was agreed to it was understood that there were matters of interest to the House that could be laid on the table—

Mr. Baldwin: But never press releases—never.

Mr. MacEachen:—that should not be communicated to the House in the form of an oral statement which would lead to further oral statements. I agree that we are in this position somewhat because yesterday the hon. member and his party abused the rules. I think it worth pointing out that when one rule is abused, as it was abused yesterday, without any opportunity for spokesmen on this side to reply to long argument made by the other side, this tends to lead to other abuses.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker ruled yesterday.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker ruled yesterday that if an argument were to be made under the particular Standing Order used by the opposition, it would be equitable to allow the other side to argue. That was his ruling and we did not argue the point. But if the same practice is to be followed in the future, if hon. members should use the Standing Order to make an argument, then we shall have to claim our rights on this side.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: The minister, not having been given an opportunity at any point yesterday to answer the arguments made by the opposition, today used another Standing Order to lay on the table an explanation of the statistical procedures that were employed by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. I claim that under this Standing Order he has the right to do that, but I think his action has to be understood in light of the situation that developed yesterday, which I thought was quite unsatisfactory from a procedural point of view.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the President of the Privy Council simply to assert that what the minister has done is only to exercise a right under Standing Order 41 (2) does not necessarily make it a fact. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, and in my view you should so rule, that what the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce did was to use Standing Order 41(2) to get the floor, and once he had the floor he made what amounted to a statement on motions.

Mr. Baldwin: Quite right.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): To say that he was tabling a document, without adding anything more,

[Mr. MacEachen.]

would have been all right. But he described that document in a manner which constituted, in effect, entering into the debate which Your Honour would not permit yesterday—and I do not quarrel with that ruling. The President of the Privy Council has just said that the government had no chance to reply yesterday and therefore it was replying now. That is precisely what the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce did. The words he used were the government's answer to the whole question of the change in the methodology, to use Your Honour's word of yesterday. I submit that because the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has today made what is a statement on motions, Your Honour should follow the rule that permits spokesmen for the opposition parties to comment on such statements.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, I assumed that I could make a statement in response to the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member assumed a bit too much. I would think that very valid points have been made in this argument by the President of the Privy Council and the hon. member for Peace River. We are faced with a very difficult situation.

Hon. members will recall that when an attempt was made yesterday by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate to present a motion to the House under the terms of Standing Order 43, I rose and on a point of order suggested to the hon. member that his statement was going somewhat far beyond what was allowed under Standing Order 43, that he was in effect making a statement, and that if we allowed such statements to be made in support of motions under Standing Order 43 the government, or someone on behalf of the other side of the House if such a motion were made by a government member, should be allowed to make a statement in reply thereto. This is why I invited the hon. member to put the motion as quickly as possible. The President of the Privy Council has stated that to reply to the statement made yesterday by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce thought what he should do is table a document in the form of a press release by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

Mr. Pepin: By the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

Mr. Speaker: I have serious doubts whether this is a correct practice. I would think that the correct practice might have been for the hon. minister to make a statement on motions.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre says that the minister has made a statement. I am not certain that he has. I felt that the minister in tabling the document was coming very close to making a statement when he described the document that he was tabling. I cannot judge nor rule that it was really an argument or statement which the minister was making when he tabled the document. Perhaps he should not have described it, as he did. Having said that, I cannot find that the minister has made a statement. It is still open to him to make a