

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. George H. Hees (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the government undertook to make available such funds as would be required to undertake such a works program, but for one reason or another the works program was not able to be started and the funds were not required.

Mr. Murphy (Westmorland): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Am I to understand then that nothing has been done to prevent these lay-offs?

Mr. Hees: The answer to that question is that the offer of the government to make the funds available, and the offer of the Canadian National Railways to carry out such a program, are still open.

Mr. Murphy (Westmorland): May I ask a further supplementary question. Does the minister still consider the recent Canadian National Railways lay-offs at Moncton as deplorable and unnecessary, as he was quoted as saying in the *Moncton Times* concerning similar lay-offs two years ago when he visited Moncton in a similar situation?

Mr. Hees: That is a very easy question to answer. Any lay-offs are deplorable and regretted by the government, as I am sure they are regretted by all Canadians, but lay-offs have to take place from time to time.

UNEMPLOYMENT—INQUIRY AS TO GOVERNMENT ACTION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Erhart Regier (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Labour this question. Is the government aware of the rapidly growing unemployment problem? If so, what is the government planning to do about it?

Hon. Michael Starr (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, we are aware that there will be seasonal unemployment this winter. We have stepped up our winter program to take care of winter unemployment. We have also advised our national employment service offices to step up their tempo in obtaining jobs for people as soon as they become unemployed. I might say also, on behalf of the government, that we have curtailed for the balance of the year the influx of immigrants which swelled our total labour population. In addition we have channelled \$150 million into our economy for the construction of houses. These are the things the government has done so far in order to cope with unemployment this winter.

Mr. Regier: May I ask the minister a supplementary question. Did I understand the minister to say, by implication at least, that the August unemployment figures are in any way to be classed as seasonal?

Mr. Starr: No, the hon. member did not ask me that question and I made no mention of any August unemployment figures.

Hon. George C. Marler (St. Antoine-Westmount): May I ask a supplementary question of the Minister of Labour. He has just spoken of the sum of \$150 million which has been made available for housing. Can he tell the house how much of that \$150 million has actually been disbursed?

Hon. Howard C. Green (Minister of Public Works): This comes under the Department of Public Works. I have not had a report yet for last week, but as of the week before that I think there had been some \$20 million committed and about \$80 million earmarked. Mind you, that might not all be taken up in loans, but I think very nearly that figure of \$80 million would be required. I have no doubt that the figures now, a week later, are a good deal higher, but unfortunately I am not able to give them to the hon. member today.

NEW BRUNSWICK—UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES FOR 1956-57

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Wesley Stuart (Charlotte): I should like to direct a question also to the Minister of Labour. How many are registered as unemployed in New Brunswick at this time, particularly in the Campbellton area—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Stuart (Charlotte):—and how do those figures compare with last year?

Hon. Michael Starr (Minister of Labour): I have not that information available, as I am not able to carry it in my head, but if the hon. member wants that information I shall be glad to convey it to him.

AGRICULTURE

INQUIRY AS TO CHANGES IN SUPPORT PRICES

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Melville): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Agriculture. Has there been a change since the government took office in the support prices provided for by the Agricultural Prices Support Act of 1944 on any of the farm products, and if so, what change?