

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

Mr. Mackasey: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have asked for representations from the representatives of the workers and also, of course, from the employers. The basic concept behind unemployment insurance is interruption of earnings rather than unemployment, but there have been representations from the representatives of the workers concerning the definition of earnings.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY

POSSIBLE RESIGNATION OF QUEBEC SOCIAL AFFAIRS
MINISTER—NEGOTIATIONS ON MORE ACCEPTABLE
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to ask my question of the right hon. Prime Minister but, as he is absent, I shall ask it of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Since Mr. Castonguay suggested that the lack of comprehension and consultation between the federal government and Quebec is the reason for his threat of resignation, in view also of the present volcanic climate in the province of Quebec, we must endeavour to improve the situation and to prevent the loss of one of the outstanding Quebec ministers.

Would the minister say to this House whether he intends to meet his Quebec colleague as soon as possible to discuss with him the question of a social security system which would be more acceptable to the Quebec government?

[English]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the hon. member that in terms of the family allowances we have been meeting constantly with Quebec, and I think to the beneficial end of both levels of government.

Mr. Stanfield: Which is the beneficial end of this government?

Mr. Munro: I would expect that we would come to an agreeable accommodation within a matter of days, so the negotiations along that line have been proceeding very well.

With reference to the government's intention to increase old age pensions, this, of course, was announced in the budget speech. For reasons that are obvious when that procedure is adopted, there could not be the consultation that otherwise might have taken place. As is obvious from recent speeches by members of all the opposition parties in the House, we were faced with what they agree is a fact, that a significant number of those 1,800,000 Canadians desperately need assistance, and that is what the Minister of Finance has done.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Mr. Caouette.]

FAMILY ALLOWANCES—EXERCISE OF LEGISLATIVE
POWER BY QUEBEC

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

In view of the answer which was recently given to me in the House by the hon. minister, specifically that there was no question of the federal government granting Quebec legislative primacy in the area of family allowances, does the minister intend to change his mind, following the events taking place in that province, and assure Social Affairs Minister Castonguay that the federal government will indeed grant Quebec legislative primacy in this area?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the discussions with Quebec as well as with the other provinces were set out in a letter from the Prime Minister to the premiers. He indicated the guidelines within which we felt it would be reasonable to expect the provinces to have an option to design family allowances within federal minimum standards. As far as I am aware the negotiations with Quebec have been proceeding very well and there has been no dissatisfaction expressed by that province with respect to the suggested accommodation in this particular regard.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hope we will find a way to shorten both the questions and answers because we are running short of time.

[Translation]

Some hon. members have supplementary questions, including the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette).

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PENSIONS

OLD AGE SECURITY—EFFECT OF INCREASE IN
GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT ON WELFARE
BENEFITS

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

If we grant a senior citizen, whose spouse has not yet reached the age of 65, the security income supplement, do we in such a case file an application with the social welfare office of Quebec or with other provinces? Would the minister tell us whether he found out from provincial authorities if the increase granted people aged 65 will decrease the welfare allowance his spouse is receiving at the present time?

[English]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the minister to reply but it seems to me that to some extent we are getting involved in discussing the details of a bill which is already before a committee.