

*Oral Questions*

realize it is on the subject of the gigantic staff of the Prime Minister's office that is running this country and this might prove embarrassing.

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Hon. members can, if they wish, bring to attention of the parliamentary secretary certain questions they feel should be answered more quickly, but it is not according to the well established practice of the House for hon. members to make the kind of comments or speeches such as those made by the hon. member and the hon. member for Trinity.

**Mr. Hellyer:** We have to get their attention, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, may I call the attention of the Parliamentary Secretary to Question No. 21 which, in addition to having been on the order paper since 4 January 1973, has also stirred special public interest, and ask him whether it will be answered soon?

[*English*]

**Mr. Reid:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

#### ESTIMATE OF CASH ADVANCES TO BE REQUIRED IN FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 1974

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance I shall direct this question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. As a result of the opportunity the minister had over the weekend to reflect and to observe the Minister of Finance when he appeared on television and said, as I heard his words, that unlike last year he was now able to predict the unemployment insurance figures, will the minister give a simple clearcut answer concerning the cash requirements in respect of the Unemployment Insurance Commission for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1974 and/or the amount of the contributions to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund when unemployment exceeds 4 per cent?

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I would wait for the Minister of Finance to make his forecast before I would undertake to give those figures. I indicated the other day that by the Unemployment Insurance Act and the amendment recently made to that act cash requirements become appropriations as such in the following year and this amount is known and included in the main estimates at this time.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Did the minister obtain from the officials of the Unemployment Insurance Commission any information as to the cash requirements for the ensuing fiscal year and/or the contributions which might be required to

[*Mr. Cossitt.*]

be made in respect of the government's share of the contributions?

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before the Miscellaneous Estimates Committee, I believe, we can forecast a range of cash requirements based on various levels of unemployment and based on the many other variable factors involved in such a calculation, many of which have been indicated by the Minister of Finance and many which are applicable to the straight question of unemployment levels. We can give a range of requirements which will be accurate within certain boundaries, but it does depend on the length of time people will be on benefit, the average weekly wage, the level of unemployment and a whole series of other matters the complexities of which it has been indicated, would make it very difficult to give an absolutely accurate forecast at this date.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, in order that the House may have this very important information before it is asked to approve the budget of the Minister of Finance I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he would require the former Minister of Manpower and Immigration, the hon. member for Verdun, who apparently is able to answer these questions, to answer the questions I have asked?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand.

### COMMISSION POLICY RESPECTING UNEMPLOYED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS SEEKING BENEFITS

**Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary and is addressed to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. It relates to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Is it now the policy of the Unemployment Insurance Commission deliberately and systematically to disentitle seasonal agricultural workers from unemployment insurance benefits?

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, absolutely not, as such. The disentitlement of any worker is based on certain factors, including proof of search for work, availability for work and willingness to take work if in fact it is available.

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** That being the case, would the minister investigate the gestapo-type tactics that are being employed in my area to deliberately and systematically disentitle the seasonal agricultural workers from their proper benefits?

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, without in any way accepting the premise or description the hon. member has applied to the activities of the unemployment insurance commission, I would be very glad to investigate any specific instances. In fact, it would put me in a much better position to answer such questions in the House if the hon. member would give me advance notice of the question, provided he really is seeking information.