

Inquiries of the Ministry

ed, and I wish them and the province of Nova Scotia well in any such study.

● (11:10 a.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, since I am quite familiar with the problem of the heavy water plant in Glace Bay, I am pleased to make some comments on the minister's statement.

What surprises me is that the federal government wants to assist a Crown corporation established by the former premier of Nova Scotia who is now Leader of the official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield). This corporation, as we know, is on the verge of bankruptcy. It is a white elephant. It has shown only deficits since the beginning and it costs several million dollars in interests alone.

We know quite well that the leader of the Liberal party in Nova Scotia based its election campaign last year on the possibility of saving the heavy water plant. Now, that plant is completely obsolete and we want to save, at a cost of \$300,000, an undertaking that is considered in Nova Scotia as nothing more than a white elephant. Moreover, until now the company has been very badly managed financially.

I wonder how come the federal government now wants to risk an amount of \$300,000, unless it is to keep the election promise of the present premier of Nova Scotia, and also to save an undertaking launched by the Leader of the official Opposition, a crown company on the verge of bankruptcy that has never produced an ounce of heavy water to this day.

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT—WELFARE COSTS—INCREASED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE UNDER CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. Does the government now propose any increased assistance to the provinces and the municipalities in view of the skyrocketing costs of welfare resulting from increasing unemployment? I point out that this is particularly urgent in view of statements such as that made by the Metro Toronto Social Services Commission describing the problem as reaching crisis proportions even in Toronto, that great centre which we normally consider to be one of the most dynamic and prosperous cities in the country.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would agree with the last statement

[Mr. Thomson.]

made by the Leader of the Opposition that Toronto is one of the most dynamic and progressive cities on the continent.

Mr. Sharp: In answer to the question that was put to me may I say that the subject of the shares of costs of welfare was discussed at the conference yesterday and will be discussed again today. As I said yesterday in the House, the government has not yet made a decision on the requests of the provinces.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister whether this is a subject that can just be considered along these lines? In view of the information that is coming forth daily as to the effect of increasing welfare costs not only upon the people who have to go on welfare but upon the governments directly involved, does he believe this is something that can be let run along, or is the government of Canada now prepared to increase the federal share of assistance under the Canada Assistance Plan in relation to the funds required to meet the costs of welfare, particularly of welfare for those Canadians who are employable?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would expect us to consider the requests before we make any decision. I can assure him that the matter is under active consideration in cabinet, and when a decision is made it will be announced in the House.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, would the Acting Prime Minister not agree that the government has had about a year to consider this question?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

UNEMPLOYMENT—CONSIDERATION OF INSTITUTION OF GUARANTEED INCOME PLAN

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Acting Prime Minister. In addition to the consideration that the Acting Prime Minister says will be given to the request for an increase in the percentage paid by the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan, may I ask, particularly in view of the persistence of unemployment, whether the government is also considering the proposal for the early institution of the guaranteed income plan for Canadians?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government was the first in this country to issue a paper on the subject, which indicates our very great interest in the matter. It is, as the white paper indicates, a matter of government policy. This is the direction in which we think we should move.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, since the white paper to which the Acting Prime Minister has referred turns down the guaranteed income plan, will the government reconsider it now that it has been requested by a number of the provinces?