

Canada—10.5 per cent in the Atlantic area, 8.4 per cent in Quebec, 6.6 per cent in British Columbia and 6 per cent over the entire country—I want to ask the Prime Minister if the government intends to announce a program to provide employment opportunities as asked for by the Association of Mayors and Municipalities. If so, when does the Prime Minister expect to be able to make such a statement?

Hon. Bryce S. Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has asked me to question, or at least I question, the statistics which the hon. gentleman has now placed before the house on two occasions. The opening statement in the D.B.S. report says, "Total employment increased slightly since the last report a month ago." I think these facts should also be put on the record, that the rate of unemployment in October was 5 per cent, in November 4.9 per cent, in December 4.8 per cent, on January 18 it was 4.3 per cent and on February 15 it was 4.3 per cent, which indicates a trend towards the better.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the work force of the country has increased by 20,000 people this month. We have been able to find jobs for these people. In addition to that, in an emergency debate not too long ago the Prime Minister indicated that with the establishment of the new department of regional expansion, and increased acceleration of the manpower program, we intend to tackle the problem of unemployment on a full-time permanent basis, rather than with ad hoc temporary measures.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the figures I quoted were issued today by the government, and in view of the fact that the minister was merely quoting seasonally adjusted figures, and that the number of persons added to the labour force is not much consolation to those who are unemployed, may I ask him, since 6 per cent seems to be the usual figure for this season of the year for three years in succession, whether the government has now accepted 6 per cent as its goal for unemployment in this country?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Labour just indicated, we have plans in the new department to attack this problem on a logical and total basis. That is why we have a Government Organization Act, and we hope the opposition will co-operate with us in getting this act through the house.

Inquiries of the Ministry

SHIPBUILDING

REQUEST FOR REPORT OF COMMITTEE CONSIDERING SHIPYARD EMPLOYMENT

Mr. H. Russell MacEwan (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Can the minister report at this time as to the deliberations of the committee, composed of persons from the shipbuilding industry and various government departments, which was set up to look into shipbuilding matters, with a view to alleviating the very heavy unemployment in the shipyards of the country?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): The committee will report in due course, Mr. Speaker.

PROCEDURE

REVIEW BY COMMITTEE OF STANDING ORDER 26

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my supplementary question to the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton who is chairman of the Committee on Procedure. In light of the remarks made by Mr. Speaker would the hon. member consider reviewing the provisions of Standing Order 26, having in mind that the condition of unemployment may well be chronic during the term of office of this government?

[Translation]

FINANCE

REVIEW OF HIGH INTEREST RATES

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Would he tell the house if the government intends to study the matter of interest rates, considering they are at their highest level in this century and, consequently, cannot attract foreign investments?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, not only does the question seem very general to me, but it should be asked of the Minister of Finance.

[English]

HEALTH AND WELFARE

SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL DOCTORS

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.