

Inquiries of the Ministry

the 24th from the Premier of Manitoba. Perhaps his staff has not yet drawn it to his attention.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, may I inform the House and the hon. gentleman opposite that the Premier of Manitoba held a press conference on Friday at which he released the text of both the letter and the telegram. Both the letter and the telegram ought to be within the knowledge of the Prime Minister now.

An hon. Member: If he sent it.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the wire but if the member is right in saying that the Premier released the text of a wire and the letter, certainly I have received a letter dated September 22—27—

Mr. Lewis: The 17th.

An hon. Member: David wrote it; he should know.

Mr. Trudeau: I apologize, the hon. member is quite right; the letter is dated September 17, Mr. Speaker. I regret to say that it contains several outrageous statements and I intend to answer the Premier of Manitoba frankly about some of the issues that he brought up which seem to me to indicate a lack of candidness in his approach to this whole problem.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that Premier Schreyer can defend himself against this quite unwarranted suggestion of the Prime Minister. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he is now ready to call a special emergency conference of first ministers and other ministers, if necessary, before the end of the month of October to discuss possible programs to deal with the unemployment problem this winter, which is likely to be more severe than it is now?

Mr. Trudeau: Although I have replied to this before, I think it might be well to set the facts before the House once again, Mr. Speaker. Late in July I wrote to all premiers following the Victoria conference suggesting an early meeting of the federal and provincial first ministers. I suggested two dates in, early or late October, and they were not acceptable to the premiers. I then suggested two dates in November and they were not acceptable to Premier Schreyer—

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Trudeau: —because he was off on some trip to Europe, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

An hon. Member: He is training to be prime minister.

Mr. Trudeau: So in consultation with Mr. Schreyer's office the earliest date we were able to settle was at the beginning of December.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

[Mr. Lewis.]

Mr. Lewis: Hon. members are of course aware that Premier Schreyer is not the only person in power who has made trips across the world, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if we might return now to the hon. member's supplementary question.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Prime Minister this supplementary question: is he considering presenting either to Parliament or to the provincial governments as well as Parliament an emergency program of job-creating works across the country this winter and, if so, then may we expect the announcement of such a program?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, if it is done it will not be to secure political advantage as the leader of the New Democratic Party in this House and the leader of the New Democratic Party in Manitoba are trying to do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for York South rises on a point of order.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I do not wear the mantle on a point of order of saying that what we do in this House has nothing to do with the political situation in the country—

An hon. Member: Not much.

Mr. Lewis: —but I suggest to the right hon. gentleman that there is no one in this House more adept at political hypocrisy than he is.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Obviously we are not progressing very effectively. I suggest to hon. members that the last few exchanges have not helped the situation at all. We have a number of supplementaries which perhaps are more legitimate. I will recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the right hon. Prime Minister whether in his letters to the first ministers in July he indicated that he wished to discuss with them programs to attack winter unemployment and whether it is his view that a letter written in July inviting the provincial premiers to a meeting in October indicates any urgent view on his part about winter unemployment in this country?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I had no knowledge in Victoria that the provincial governments wanted to consider unemployment to be written as a matter under provincial jurisdiction—that they wanted it to be in the constitution that unemployment was provincial. When I suggested at Victoria that we have an early meeting in the fall to discuss matters of the economy, taxation, unemployment and all the rest I said I would be writing to them in the following month, which I did, to suggest an early meeting in the fall. Therefore I carried out the request of the conference. That is not to say that the federal government has not been considering all aspects of unemployment