

Inquiries of the Ministry

SUGGESTED LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS ON SUPPLYING OF INFORMATION BY OFFICES

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the minister. In view of the seriousness of the unemployment situation, will he take immediate steps to lift any and all restrictions on the free flow of information from Canada Manpower offices across the country?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members know, this department co-operates with the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in providing the most reliable information we have on unemployment figures. In many other ways we do provide a tremendous amount of information, and I will be glad to send hon. members the most recent data we have.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

SPECIAL RECRUITMENT OF FRANCOPHONES—REQUEST THAT PROGRAM NOT BE INITIATED PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to one of the two presidents across the way, either the President of the Privy Council or the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the statement made earlier today to the effect that the government prefers to postpone for several weeks any discussion of certain public service recruitment programs, can an assurance be given that the program referred to in the memorandum tabled yesterday will not be put into effect before the committee has an opportunity to discuss this matter?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I suppose I should reiterate that there is no such program. I did give an assurance yesterday that a program of this character would not be put into operation out of the contingency fund without being disclosed first in the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in view of the answer just given by the minister, can he tell us whether the meeting that was called, according to the memorandum tabled yesterday, "to help speed up the implementation of the program" was held on Tuesday, January 12, and what were the results of that meeting?

Mr. Drury: I will have to take that question as notice, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether the meeting ever took place.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): They don't tell you any more than they tell us.

REDUCTIONS IN ISOLATED POST ALLOWANCES—REQUEST FOR DELAY UNTIL REVIEWED BY COMMITTEE

Mr. Len Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the great concern expressed over the Treasury Board's announcement of cuts in isolated post allowances

[Mr. Speaker.]

for federal government employees in certain isolated and remote communities in Canada, would the minister be prepared to delay implementation of these changes until an appropriate committee of the House has had an opportunity to review the entire question of isolated post allowances and report on this matter?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the scheme of providing allowances in isolated posts has been one under discussion for some time with the Public Service Alliance and other appropriate employees' staff associations in the National Joint Council. Some time ago agreement was reached in the National Joint Council to implement a program which would be indexed to the differential in the cost of living. That program has been in operation and recently, quite automatically, with effect from February 1 some allowances will go up and some will come down. I think it would be unwise to interrupt this normal process. However, if a committee of the House wants to look at the whole program I have no objection to that.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board whether these reductions, which are pretty substantial, were in fact discussed with the representatives of the employees concerned before they were implemented or whether they were implemented unilaterally by the government?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the agreement, indeed with the proposals of the employees' representatives, changes both up and down are automatically related to the cost of living index differential.

[Translation]

ABITIBI—ALLEGED REFUSAL OF DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS TO COMMUNICATE IN FRENCH

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Minister of Supply and Services.

When his officials have dealings with my constituents, they always do it in English and refuse to speak French. Could the minister tell us if this is due to lack of good will on the part of his officials or to the inadequate number of French-speaking officials?

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that the question asked by the hon. member although interesting and important is more a representation made to the department and the hon. member must assume that it will be taken into consideration.

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[English]

MANPOWER

SIGNIFICANCE OF MEMORANDUM TO OFFICES REGARDING RELEASE OF UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the second surreptitious resurrection of memoranda this week, can the minister