

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 28, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Sixth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, in both official languages—Mr. Clermont.

[English]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Third report of Standing Committee on Public Accounts—Mr. Hales.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT—FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ALLEVIATE PROBLEM—ESTIMATE OF JOBS TO BE PRODUCED

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the statement made yesterday by Alberta's minister of welfare that he was coming to the welfare conference "not to discuss welfare programs but to discuss unemployment, which is causing welfare costs to soar, and to find out what the federal government is going to do to reduce unemployment", will the Acting Prime Minister take the opportunity tomorrow on motions to outline to the House what answer the federal government has to give to provincial inquiries of this kind which are made with great seriousness? At the same time, would he outline to the House and the country what estimate the government has concerning the number of new jobs its present program to fight unemployment is expected to produce in the next three months?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I share with the hon. gentleman the view that unemployment is the most serious problem with which the country is faced at the moment, and I am not at all surprised that the Alberta minister should regard this as a most important issue to have before this conference. I

can assure the hon. member that our representatives at the conference share that view and will be ready to discuss it with the Alberta minister.

Mr. Hees: The minister, as usually happens, did not answer my question. I would ask him again if he would take the first opportunity on motions to outline what the government is going to do to fight unemployment, as requested by the minister of welfare of Alberta. If he will not do this, would he outline to the House and to the country the government's estimate—and it must have an estimate—of the number of new jobs it expects its present program to produce in the next three months?

Mr. Sharp: On a number of occasions the Minister of Finance has dealt with this question. I would point out to the hon. member, however, that there has been a very substantial increase in employment already this year, and we expect there will be a further increase.

Mr. Hees: You mean unemployment.

Mr. Sharp: No, both. This is the essence of the problem we face, namely, that there is an increasing number of jobs in the country but the labour force happens at this particular time to be increasing much more rapidly.

Mr. Hees: As the minister refuses to answer my question, I would ask him whether it is not obvious that the government's program is in reality expected to produce very few new jobs, and is it not a bluff intended to kid the Canadian people that something is being done?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED INCREASE IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION UNDER CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask whether the government is prepared to offer to the provinces at the welfare conference an increase in the percentage paid by the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan to 60 or 65 per cent?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I expect that this question will be raised in the discussions today and tomorrow. The government is not yet in a position to give an answer.

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED ASSISTANCE TO MUNICIPALITIES AND PROVINCES TO MEET WELFARE COSTS

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): My question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact that