

Oral Questions

nity to update its submission. I would then want to have an opportunity to talk to my provincial counterparts and then provide an opportunity for my hon. colleague to make his own views known.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**EMPLOYMENT OF EXTRA OFFICIALS**

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister has announced that \$200 million will be saved through intensified interviews with unemployment insurance recipients. Since the average UIC payment in Canada is \$155.88 per week, and since the average period for drawing unemployment insurance benefits is 26 weeks, then in order to save \$200 million the Minister would have to knock 50,000 people off the UIC rolls. How many extra staff members will the Minister's Department hire to persecute, prosecute, or prevent these 50,000 people from drawing unemployment insurance?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Hon. Member thinks, the objective of claimant interviews is to ensure that we are doing everything that we possibly can to help people find jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: I would like to give an example of this to the Hon. Member. Just the other day the President of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that there were 170,000 jobs that were going unfilled. We want to find out where those jobs are, and we want to match them to those people who are unemployed so that they will be put back to work again. That will reduce the amount of money that is being paid out of the unemployment insurance fund.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not answer my question. I wanted to know the number of people who would make up "Flora's heroes".

CONSULTATION QUERY

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, has the Minister, in the spirit of co-operative federalism, consulted with the provincial Ministers of Welfare to find out if they are willing to accept this extra burden on the welfare rolls of the provinces?

• (1500)

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, where the Hon. Member and I differ is that we do not agree that there will be an additional burden on the welfare rolls. I want to reassure him that we are aware of the regional difficulties with respect to employment

in this country, and where there are no jobs available, obviously people will continue to receive unemployment insurance benefits. It was for that reason that we entered into a direct job-creation program at the beginning of our term, worth some \$430 million, which will provide jobs for 70,000 Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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Mr. Speaker: Members may want to examine today's Question Period. They will discover that the lengths of questions and answers today were the longest since the beginning of the session. I say this because I am in some difficulty. I suggest to Members who are asking questions that they should recognize the difficulty of the Speaker in policing the length of an answer if a question is long. I have the sense that the House wants the Question Period to work well and to work quickly, but I require the assistance of the House for that purpose.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PETITION**PEACE CAMP ON PARLIAMENT HILL—MR. SPEAKER'S RULING**

Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, I informed the House that the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) on Friday, November 16, 1984, met the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form. I also informed the House that there was some doubt in my mind as to the acceptability of this petition since it contained signatures from non-Canadian citizens not resident in Canada, and I referred to Citation 668(1) of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition.

On reviewing the Canadian and British precedents, I found no clear answer to the admissibility or non-admissibility of a petition which is signed by Canadian citizens and, at the same time, by non-Canadian citizens not resident in Canada. In October, 1983, Madam Speaker Sauvé ruled that a petition signed by American citizens was not receivable. That petition was signed exclusively by American citizens. Our precedents on petitions relating to Private Bills indicate that petitions from foreigners have been accepted, from time to time, when the subject matter related to legislation or an area of jurisdiction of the Canadian Parliament.

Accordingly, since I could find no clear direction in our practice and procedure, and so that those Canadian citizens who signed the said petition not be denied their ancient right to petition the House of Commons, and since this is the first time this issue has arisen in this Parliament, I ask the House that the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre be received by unanimous consent. I also suggest that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization give early consideration to the presentation of petitions, since this is not the first time that the Chair has raised issues related to this procedure.