

Inquiries of the Ministry

at least, to encourage people to break the law. It is for this reason I am pursuing this line of inquiry. I would like to ask the Prime Minister when the law of this land was changed and if it was—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that a question asked in those terms is argument, not a question seeking information. I am inviting him to ask the question in another way. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Stanfield: I will ask the Prime Minister whether the statement that there are Canadians drawing unemployment insurance benefits who are making the decision not to work is based upon information he has or whether it was just made off the top of his head. Is it based on any study or any authoritative figures?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker, it is not based on a study; it is just common knowledge that some people do not accept jobs which are offered to them by the unemployment insurance offices. I remember a case of a young man in Toronto at one of my rallies who had a placard asking for a million jobs. I said, "Do you want one job or a million?" He wanted a million. Later he came to see me and said he would take one job. I asked for his name and I looked into the matter. He had been offered two jobs by the Manpower offices but two were not enough and he turned them down. He still wanted a million jobs. That is the kind of case which is fairly frequent.

• (1420)

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that this young man did not appreciate more the great efforts the Prime Minister was making on his behalf.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: There are lots of jobs available in the Privy Council office.

Mr. Stanfield: Inasmuch as the Prime Minister's statement was not qualified in that manner but was a simple statement that there are Canadians who prefer not to work and to draw unemployment insurance, and since in those terms it is an obvious encouragement to Canadians to break the law, may I ask the Prime Minister, in his capacity as Prime Minister, to correct this impression and to withdraw that statement as it was made?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I find it very difficult to accept this kind of question. It is obviously debate. Again, I will not oppose the Prime Minister replying to the question or suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition, but when in a supplementary question he invites the Prime Minister to withdraw a statement made outside the House I cannot see how that can be acceptable as a question asked during the question period.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I will ask a perfectly non-argumentative supplementary. The Prime Minister has spoken about the many thousands of jobs that are vacant in this country. Will he tell the House how many of these jobs there are and what measures he is prepared to take to assist people to take advantage of them?

[Mr. Stanfield.]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, it is marvelous, every Monday, to see that the opposition has done nothing better over the weekend, it appears to me, than to read some abbreviated reports of speeches I have made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: I am very pleased to see that they are spending their weekends that way, although it might be more productive if they would think up some policies rather than nitpick. To answer the question, I think the Leader of the Opposition is referring to a statement I made, I believe in Victoriaville, in which I reiterated some information we had—I said it was several months ago—from Manpower offices in Montreal that there were something like 10,000 jobs available at the Manpower offices in Montreal. That is a clear statement. It does not go beyond that. If the opposition is hiding that fact from itself—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Trudeau: —they are not realistic. However, it is a clear fact that there are jobs—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Trudeau: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I suggest that the reply given by the Prime Minister is also partly argumentative or debate. I do not think the question period was intended for this kind of debate which takes quite a bit of the time of the question period from day to day. I would hope the question period would be used for the purpose for which it is intended, the seeking of information.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not want to annoy the Prime Minister, of course, but I want to tell him that when he goes out every weekend making silly statements he has to expect pretty vigorous questioning.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt whether the alleged supplementary of the Leader of the Opposition was a supplementary question. It is a continuation of debate. I doubt that the matter should be pursued further. Unless the Prime Minister has a point of order to raise, I would be prepared to go to the next question.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am really rising on the same point of order. I simply say that if the opposition holds that there are no jobs being offered in Canada to people at large, if there are no such vacancies, then my statement may have been silly and then they may have a quarrel with me, but until they say there are no jobs being offered in Canada it seems to me that this whole line of argument is just hypocritical.