

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest, following that gratuitous statement—

Some hon Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I would suggest to the minister—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not mind being howled down.

Mr. Speaker: May we have order, please. My suggestion both to the minister and to the Leader of the Opposition is that we are no longer seeking information or giving information. Following the supplementary and further supplementary questions, asked by the Leader of the Opposition we began to get more into a discussion of the merits and demerits of the case for seal hunting. I do not think we should get into that kind of debate now.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I want the record to be clear that I was howled down by Liberal members because I dared to assert that action should be taken in this regard.

Mr. Robichaud: All I ask of the right hon. gentleman is that he follow the policy that was followed by his own government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May we forget about seals for the moment.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, now that you have quietened the seals I wonder whether I might turn the attention of the house to another matter. May I draw the attention of the minister of manpower to a joint statement issued by the minister's department and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics which shows that at the middle of February there were 396,000 unemployed

in Canada, an increase of 40,000 over the same month of 1966 and representing an unemployment figure of 5.4 per cent of the Canadian labour force.

I want to ask the minister whether in the next few days on motions he would be prepared to make a statement to the house analysing these figures, to show to what extent this large increase in unemployment is due to structural unemployment caused by technological change and to what extent it is due to a decline in the economic activity of this country.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to looking at these details and statistics. After I have looked into them I shall determine whether it is proper for me to make a statement.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the minister whether when making that statement he would be prepared to detail what steps his department proposes to take to cope with this growing problem of unemployment.

Mr. Marchand: I shall have to look at the details of the statistics before making any commitment or statement.

Mr. Diefenbaker: There are almost half a million unemployed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

In view of such increase in unemployment which is particularly noticeable in Quebec where the figures are approximately the same as in the hard years of 1960, 1961 and 1962, will the minister tell us whether he intends to take special measures to check the unemployment crisis in Quebec?

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, a certain number of measures have already been taken, among which winter works carried out in co-operation with the municipalities, and of which Quebec is the largest beneficiary. This measure is already operative. It may not be perfect, but we are undoubtedly ready, with the co-operation of the provincial government, to counter seasonal unemployment.