

Inquiries of the Ministry

government has brought forward a series of measures which are still under discussion in the House in connection with the budget debate. Indeed, there has been a very rapid shift in government policy toward stimulation of the economy. I would welcome at any time on behalf of the government on this important subject and I would be happy to see a debate take place in the next few days.

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED RESCINDING OF INCOME TAX SURCHARGE AND BUILDING MATERIALS SALES TAX

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Finance. In view of the very serious statistics which have just been produced regarding mounting unemployment in the country, is he now prepared to revise the position he took when he presented his budget in December? Is he giving any consideration to rescinding the 3 per cent income tax surcharge and removing the sales tax on building materials with a view to stimulating the economy and creating effective demand as one of the best means of helping to solve the unemployment problem?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated by the Acting Prime Minister, the government is continuously concerned about unemployment in this country. As a matter of fact, the government's fiscal position has switched almost to the tune of \$2 billion since last March. In this regard I should like to point out to hon. members today —

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: Don't be so darned complacent about it!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Finance has the floor and should be allowed to reply to the question asked by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, far from being complacent about it, the government has changed its fiscal position completely over the past year in this regard. I should also like to indicate that in respect of one of the budget measures, which provides \$150 million for provincial projects, we have now been in touch with all of the provinces. They have all indicated their willingness to take these funds and proceed immediately with the expenditure of the \$150 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know there are a number of supplementaries, but in fairness at this point I think the Chair should first recognize the hon. member for Edmonton West.

UNEMPLOYMENT—REQUEST FOR RESUMPTION OF BUDGET DEBATE TO DISCUSS PROBLEM

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the President of the Privy Council. I should like to ask him whether he would schedule, as the first item of business for Monday, the continuation of the budget debate?

[Mr. Sharp.]

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will consider the representation. The program for the business of the House is laid out and members are prepared for it, but I will consider a resumption of the debate at least for a day at an early opportunity.

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED WORKS PROGRAM AND REBATE OF BUILDING MATERIALS SALES TAX IN WINTER MONTHS

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Acting Prime Minister as the first question was directed to him. As there are now 50,000 persons on relief and thousands more unemployed in Toronto alone, would the government consider a crash program of winter works and a rebate of the 11 per cent tax on building materials for construction in the winter months?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is now a very large expenditure program under way as a result of the measures introduced by the government and particularly by the Minister of Finance. I really think this is a time for constructive measures to deal with the underlying causes of unemployment which are very complicated in North America. As the Minister of Finance said, this government, far from taking a complacent view, has switched its fiscal position by \$2 billion within a few months.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I see that a number of hon. members are seeking the floor for supplementaries. For the moment the Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South and return to hon. members who seek to ask questions on the matters.

UNEMPLOYMENT—MANPOWER RETRAINING—REMOVAL OF PROVISION REQUIRING THREE YEARS IN WORK FORCE

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration in the hope that he will not be as satisfied with the situation as other ministers are. In view of the fact that a very large number of the unemployed are young people, 218,000 out of 538,000, has the minister given further consideration, as he promised last December 10 he would, to the possibility of amending the requirement in the regulations or in the Act of three years in the work force before a trainee may be entitled to allowances? Is he ready to announce such a change at the earliest opportunity?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the training programs of the Department of Manpower of course are extremely useful in providing upgrading for people who are unemployed. The three-year rule is designed to put emphasis on the training and upgrading of those who have been in the work force, and who are not simply regularly in the education process, as well as those who are most likely to be vulnerable to unemployment of a long term nature. It is not the view of the government at this time that these directions should be changed.