

Oral Questions

1,315 appeals to the board of referees, and of those 160 or 12 per cent of the appeals were allowed. This is similar to the experience of the past few years. These figures include all appeals regardless of their reasons. I would say that the figure of 2,000 which appeared in the newspaper the other day, with 1,000 supposedly successful in the Toronto-Hamilton area, may include reinstatements of non-eligibility decisions where people did begin to search for work. I do not know, but unless they went through the appeal system those are not considered to be appeals.

Mr. Alexander: Perhaps I should not have phrased my question in three parts. Is that the report of the advisory committee that the minister has given, or does he intend to bring in their report for tabling so we may know what their investigations have revealed and whether in fact there were any recommendations in that regard?

Mr. Andras: Those figures are not based on the advisory committee's report, but I will be getting a report from the advisory committee shortly. I cannot give the precise day or date, although I have been in touch with the chairman and the committee seems to be proceeding satisfactorily.

Mr. Alexander: I have one last supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will be recognized for a further supplementary question but perhaps we should try to get on with other supplementary questions.

BENEFIT CONTROL—ALLEGED STATEMENT BY
REFEREES INDICATING WITCH HUNT—REQUEST FOR
INVESTIGATION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): I wonder if the minister is aware of the fact that three referees in the Toronto area, I believe, by the name of Murray Tate, William Baker and Henry Weisbach have indicated that there is evidence to the effect that there is in fact a witch hunt being proceeded with which is, in their words and as reported, "terrifying innocent people". Is the minister aware of this particular set of circumstances and has he investigated or will he cause the advisory committee, if it is not ready to submit a report, to investigate the allegation of these three persons in order that its findings can be included in that report?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would be most certainly willing to do that if the three gentlemen in question or any member of any other citizen in this country would give me specific information with date, place, time and names. Allegations and innuendoes make it almost impossible for me to carry on an investigation, but the members of the advisory committee were asked to do exactly what the hon. member is suggesting.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, may I first follow up the question that the hon. member for Hamilton West has just asked. The three gentlemen to whom he referred were members of boards of referees. Perhaps the minister was not aware of that and of the fact that their statements were made on the basis or information they obtained from appellants to the board of referees. Would

[Mr. Andras.]

the minister therefore undertake, instead of waiting for someone to tell him, to contact these three gentleman and perhaps even some of the appellants to make certain that the control officers are behaving in the way in which he has said he wants them to behave?

Mr. Andras: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to do that. I would only add that I have made that invitation before and I would have been very pleased if those gentlemen had sent that specific allegation to the commission or to me. We would have been able to act on it and give precise answers to the House.

POSSIBILITY OF DISQUALIFICATION OF RECIPIENTS AS
A RESULT OF COMPUTER PRINT-OUTS AND WITHOUT
INTERVIEWS

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, the minister undertook last week on one or two occasions to inquire into the information given to me, which I gave to the House and to him, and ascertain whether or not disqualification has taken place by computer in any number of cases or whether applicants were personally interviewed before they were disqualified. Has he completed that inquiry now?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): I am advised that the disqualifications followed individual personal interviews by the benefit control officers prior to the disqualification. Again, if there are any specific instances or examples where this appears not to have been the case, I would be appreciative of the evidence so that I could act upon it. That is the information I have been given now.

Mr. Lewis: I think this matter is of such importance, and I am sure the minister would agree, for me to ask him where he got the information. I now have copies of several disqualifying letters obtained by claimants and in every case the claimant has stated that he or she was not interviewed and then received his or her disqualifying letter. May I ask the minister from whom he has obtained the information that there are personal interviews and how that information was gathered by the person who gave it to him?

Mr. Andras: This matter is before the advisory committee. I am not treating it lightly in any way, but I would be very grateful if the hon. member would give me that evidence so I can investigate these cases where necessary.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I notice six hon. members to my left are seeking the floor on supplementary questions. Before continuing these supplementary questions the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Shefford.