

Inquiries of the Ministry

and the many unfulfilled requests for unemployment insurance benefits, would the hon. minister tell us what he intends to do to cope with this situation?

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): This question comes up daily. There are bound to be some cases of delay among the 600,000 unemployment insurance applications which are processed weekly. When the delay is attributable to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, remedial action is taken immediately. When the delay is the result of the employees' or employers' action, things move slower. But we do have a responsibility, even though it is Christmas time, not to let the plan deteriorate into being a welfare plan, and the claims approved must be legitimate claims.

[Translation]

Mr. Latulippe: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Would the hon. minister also tell us whether all this trouble is not a result of centralization of the centres? Would he accede to requests for decentralization as a factor of better service to the population?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member must take for granted that the hon. minister will consider his question.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**CYPRUS—CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEKEEPING FORCE—INITIATIVE TAKEN TO SETTLE PROBLEM**

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether as a result of the decision by the Irish government to withdraw its contingent from the United Nations peacekeeping force on Cyprus, Canada has been asked to contribute a larger number of men, and, if so, what attitude the government has taken toward any such request.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): We have received no such request.

Mr. Macquarrie: Considering the long time during which our forces have been on Cyprus, can the minister advise us whether this country is taking any initiative toward bringing about some meaningful mediation directed to a settlement of this problem?

• (3:00 p.m.)

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the House may recall that when I announced the extension for another six months of our participation, I said we were making it quite clear that we hoped our continued participation would not be an excuse for delaying the negotiations. To that extent at least, we are applying pressure for successful negotiations.

[Mr. Latulippe.]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**ISSUANCE OF CHEQUES BY HAND TO EXPEDITE PAYMENT OF BENEFITS**

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. This is related to one asked earlier, and to which the answer was in the affirmative. I would like to ask the minister whether he can make arrangements with the Unemployment Insurance Commission for a change in its regulations so that in situations where records in unemployment insurance offices indicate that the claims are in order and the computers do not seem to spew out any cheques, the cheques could be issued, authorized by the appropriate authority, by hand, so that people could get their money?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, it would be much faster and more appropriate if the hon. gentleman would bring to my attention specific cases so that I could give them my personal attention.

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HOUSING**POSSIBILITY OF RENT INCREASES IN 1972—GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ACTION**

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. On Friday, December 17, in a reply to a question put by my colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough, the minister stated he had not yet studied the prediction of the Housing and Urban Development Association of Canada that rents may increase in 1972 by between 5 per cent and 15 per cent but that he would and, if such a prediction seemed correct, he would initiate action with the provinces. Has the minister studied that prediction, and does he believe now that the prediction is serious enough for him to initiate talks with the provinces to avert such rent increases?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The minister might reply to the first question briefly. The second question, in which the member invites the minister to express an opinion, of course is not in order. I draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that there are four minutes left before the end of the question period, and I hope hon. members will try to limit their supplementaries.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the statement made by the Housing and Urban Development Association has been studied. In our opinion the data on which it was based are somewhat questionable and we do not agree that there will be that kind of increase. But in spite of all that, we are in constant consultation with the provinces in an attempt to keep down increases in housing costs generally.