

Inquiries of the Ministry

Finance will be able, in any event, to give me the answer. Does the minister or the government have an estimate of the increased cost of welfare to the federal government caused by the increased levels of unemployment?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take notice of the question with regard to the expected increased costs of welfare for this year. I would be glad to get the figure for my hon. friend.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, would the minister obtain this information and give it to the House, particularly for the benefit of the Prime Minister who seems to think that high welfare costs would result from programs designed to get the economy moving again?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

UNEMPLOYMENT—ESTIMATES OF SEASONALLY ADJUSTED FIGURE AND GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT FOR 1971

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister arising out of the speech which he made in Regina on Saturday night. Referring to the present economic recession and high rate of unemployment, the Prime Minister said:

The federal government is determined that we shall get over this temporary problem.

In an endeavour to find out how temporary is "temporary", may I ask the Prime Minister whether the government has any estimate as to what will be the seasonally adjusted figure for unemployment for 1971 and whether the government has any estimate as to the GNP growth rate in constant dollars for the same year?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, at the time of budget speeches we try to give these forecasts to the House and to the country as best we can, but it is not usual—

Mr. Woolliams: You are never right.

Mr. Trudeau: As the member says.

UNEMPLOYMENT—EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS AND WELFARE PAYMENTS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In the same speech the Prime Minister stated:

The challenge is to remedy the wrongs and to assist the injured.

I ask the Prime Minister whether the government is prepared to do anything about the present unemployment insurance benefits and the eligibility provisions. Also, does the government intend to do anything about providing adequate welfare for those who are presently banned because of the fact they are transients?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer, of course, is that we have just recently increased the benefits to the unemployed by 10 per cent,

[Mr. Stanfield.]

and that very soon we will have a bill before the House which will present to the House a much improved unemployment insurance system. We hope we will have the support of all parties in passing it.

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF CROWN CORPORATIONS AS MEANS OF REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, this morning's CBC program, "The World at Eight", contained a statement that the federal minister, "Jean-Lac" Pepin, said that—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): The federal trade minister, Jean-Luc Pepin, said that—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): —increasing the number of crown corporations may be one way of reducing unemployment in Canada. I ask the Prime Minister if the minister was making a statement of government policy? If so, which Crown corporations does the government have in mind?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I am not aware of the statement, Mr. Speaker. I will ask Mr. "Jean-Lac" Pepin about it.

FINANCE MINISTER'S FORECAST OF REDUCED UNEMPLOYMENT—RELATIONSHIP TO INCREASE IN GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance. The minister has made repeated statements that the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment will decline substantially through 1971. Is this based on any forecast with regard to the real increase in the gross national product?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I made some forecasts in my recent budget speech about the general outlook in Canada for 1971, with which most responsible economists agree—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: Name one.

Mr. Benson: —which will lead to an increase in the gross national product throughout 1971 with a resultant decrease in unemployment throughout the year—not quickly, as I have said previously. Dealing with seasonally adjusted rates, which my friend sometimes supports in summer and hates in winter—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: Will the minister be good enough to answer a simple question in a straightforward manner? Will he tell the House whether his forecasts with regard to a reduction in unemployment are based upon a specific estimate with regard to the growth of the GNP in 1971?