

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Laing: Mr. Speaker, speaking to the matter raised, I want to assure the House that we will endeavour to conduct the House today just as on any ordinary day.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Orlikow: That's the trouble.

Mr. Laing: The laughter engendered on the other side is all part of an act that is being put on today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Laing: I want to renew the statement made to the opposite side of the House that today I have the honour of being Acting Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Laing: There are a number of ministers away today, all for very good reasons, and all of them, with the exception of one, on government business. However, there are ministers here in every case acting for them, or their Parliamentary Secretaries, who are prepared to answer any question which the Leader of the Opposition or any other member on the other side of the House is prepared to ask today. We are waiting for questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Laing: And we are not going to be satisfied by a statement from the other side to the effect that because the people are not here today that they wanted to ask the questions of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the statement of the Acting Prime Minister that somebody is putting on an act on this side of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May we have order. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I think the members of the opposition are quite entitled to express surprise and disappointment, and to seek an explanation when this number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, are not here. While the Acting Prime Minister says they are ready to answer questions, it is very obvious from the two questions I asked that they are not in fact ready or capable of answering questions.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington.

Mr. Hales: My supplementary is to a minister who is not here so I do not think I will ask it. I will pass.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary to the Acting Prime

[Mr. Lewis.]

Minister in his capacity as Minister of Public Works. What specific plans do the government and his department have to help the 69,000 people who were unemployed last month in his province of British Columbia, an increase of 50 per cent over the same month last year?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member knows that what he is requesting now is a statement of a general nature. I would not think that the question in those terms is acceptable—

Mr. Korchinski: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize the hon. member for Mackenzie in a moment since he appears to have a supplementary question, but I would think it would not be in order if members representing different provinces stood in their places, one after another, and asked for a statement on the situations in their respective provinces. I have some doubts whether this would be proper procedure, and so in this light I would think the question as asked is not in order.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre rises on the point of order that has been under discussion. The Chair has returned to the question period, but if the hon. member has another point of order I will recognize him now.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Arising out of the discussion and of the whole situation, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, that the House now proceed to orders of the day.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It has been moved by Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) that the House now proceed to orders of the day. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.
And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Speaker: Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion (Mr. Knowles, Winnipeg North Centre) which was negatived on the following division: