

*Inquiries of the Ministry***LABOUR CONDITIONS****BELL ISLAND, NFLD.—ASSISTANCE TO
UNEMPLOYED MINERS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. May I ask the Prime Minister whether he is in a position today, as he promised on Friday, to give a detailed report as to what the government has in mind to assist the 850 miners who will be displaced as a result of the closing by Cosco of the mine at Bell Island? The Prime Minister may recall that questions were posed in the house last week to the Minister of Industry and also to himself by the hon. member for St. John's East and myself.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): The hon. member for St. John's East has also indicated his intention to ask this question which was asked last Friday, with some reference having been made to it before that. I think that the best way to give the answer I indicated I would give is to read from a telegram which I have sent to the premier of the province concerned, Newfoundland, which includes the following paragraphs:

We are setting up a working group of senior officials from all federal government agencies concerned, and we would like to arrange for discussions at the earliest convenient time with officials of the government of Newfoundland to explore both the possibility of promoting alternative opportunities for employment on Bell Island and measures for the retraining and re-establishment of all persons who are now employed in the mining activity who would be interested in employment elsewhere. In such a program employment elsewhere in Newfoundland would, of course, be given priority. It would be our thought that a report to both governments should be prepared, after consultation by the officials, for consideration at the earliest feasible date.

We realize fully what a disastrous economic blow the closing of the mine will be to this large community and indeed to the economy of Newfoundland and are anxious to do everything we can as a government to help meet the situation.

Mr. Joseph P. O'Keefe (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria said I was not here. I am very much here. As the Prime Minister knows, I was going to ask that question this afternoon, so the hon. member opposite is mistaken.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am getting those messages too. I am, of course, aware how seriously this situation is regarded by many people and the matter is to be discussed at our cabinet meeting tomorrow morning. As it happens, the minister responsible for the corporation is absent today; I believe he is addressing the Canadian Labour Congress. However, I hope he will be back for the meeting tomorrow morning when we will be discussing this matter, and I hope that a statement can be made after that discussion.

Mr. Douglas: A supplementary question. Is it possible, at least as a preliminary move in the right direction, for the government to consider accepting the applications which were already submitted in good faith and which have been in the hands of the corporation for some time?

Mr. Pearson: I should not like to express an opinion on this matter, Mr. Speaker, but I would be glad to look into it.

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION**FURTHER REQUESTS FOR AID TO WORKERS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the future minister of manpower.

Since he announced to the house that Jamaican workers would come to work in some parts of Canada, has the minister received other requests from Canadian organizations asking for immigrant labour, either from Jamaica or elsewhere?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Personally, I did not get any. I could inquire if any were received by the department.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

Since for the last five months we have been addressing ourselves to the future minister of the new department of manpower, which will be created eventually, can the Prime Minister tell us when he intends to create that department, so that we may be able to address the minister as such?

[*English*]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly on our list of priority legislation and I hope we will get to it as soon as possible.