

the slashing of \$600 million to \$1 billion from the unemployment insurance program at a time when this country is experiencing 1.5 million people unemployed?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt has lots of imagination and that he is misinformed.

[English]

AMOUNT OF BENEFITS—REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL
COMMITMENT

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister thinks it is my imagination, perhaps he can give us all an assurance. In light of the fact that the present unemployment insurance program in the present fiscal year is scheduled to generate a surplus of \$1.7 billion, will the Minister stand in this House now and make a commitment that in fact, whatever he announces on May 15, will not be a cut-back in payments to unemployment insurance recipients?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly not make any commitments, especially not on the basis of calculations by the New Democrats. I don't think that is the way to have a healthy economy in this country, especially where the Unemployment Insurance Fund is concerned.

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STATISTICS CANADA

1986 CENSUS—POSSIBILITY OF MISTAKE CONCERNING QUEBEC—
EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada.

The Minister is aware of the fact that the Government of Quebec, through the Minister of Finance, has said that the 1986 Census is wrong and that its estimate of the population of Quebec is short by 86,000 people, which means that Quebec is being deprived of \$30 million in equalization payments.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada—if her colleague would stop shouting so she can understand my question—what specific measures she intends to take to ensure that the 1986 Census data are accurate and that none of the provinces will be penalized as a result of the StatsCan data?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, the quality of the work done by Statistics Canada, which is a federal agency, is well known both nationally and internationally.

Oral Questions

We have here a technical and statistical matter and I certainly do not want to turn this into an occasion for political rhetoric.

[English]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, it is not Statistics Canada which is on trial, it is the way this Government has been running it.

DATA COMPILATION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, given the fact that when the census people were appointed last year some people failed the tests with results of only 8 per cent or 9 per cent but were appointed anyway because they were relatives of Tory riding association presidents—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Boudria:—and given the fact that the Government had initially cancelled the census and reinstated it only at the last minute, can the Minister tell us what the Government is going to do to repair the damage caused by the previous Minister, who is now the Minister of Public Works, when he allowed that kind of political patronage to damage Statistics Canada the way he did?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, it is an insult to the students of Canada to assume the census was not properly taken because most of the work was done by students.

Yesterday, on the occasion of—

Mr. Boudria: That was not what I said.

Mrs. Vézina:—I assume the Hon. Member wants an answer . . . Yesterday I heard an evaluation of our census. It was very well done, and I have every confidence in the quality of the data collected by StatsCan.

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[English]

APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA—PROPOSED SALE OF PREFABRICATED HOUSES

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. What is the Government's reaction to the proposed sale of 20,000 prefabricated houses at a cost of \$200 million to South Africa for the use of the South African Government, this sale being entered into by Canadian businessmen?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that sale is permissible under the existing law of Canada.