

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Martin (Essex East): May I ask the minister a few questions? Would the minister like to revert to motions to make his statement?

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member rising to ask a supplementary question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Does the minister derive much encouragement, as he said he did, from the fact that 8.8 per cent of the labour force is without jobs and seeking work? Does he think that this situation having regard to the employed force in Canada, represents a result which warrants that encouragement, particularly when we compare the 8.8 per cent with the corresponding figure of 2.5 per cent in Great Britain? Does he think this indicates that their 550,000 unemployed in a country of 48 million is comparable with our 537,000 in a country of 17 million people?

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, I get reports from the dominion bureau of statistics, I get reports from the national employment service offices, and I also get reports through the press as to the situation in Great Britain. Unfortunately I am in somewhat of a dilemma at times because I am unable to get the Martin B.S. figures—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Starr: I was referring to the "Martin bureau of statistics". In answering the hon. member's question may I say that I get a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that the trend has been reversed, from the fact that two months earlier than has been the case in other years, unemployment is showing a decrease rather than an increase. I take a great deal of pride in that, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that the things this government has done have brought about this change.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the minister would add to our information on this very important matter by giving us the comparable percentage figure in the United States.

Mr. Starr: I have not got those figures with me—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): It is 6.1 per cent.

Mr. Starr: —but I know that hon. members opposite have these figures. I think they are very much disturbed by this release because it did not show another increase as they expected.

Mr. Pearson: Does the minister not realize that we are indeed disturbed by these figures,

and deeply disturbed because the comparable figures in the United States are so much lower?

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, this government—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Martin (Essex East): May I direct a question to the Minister of Labour. Can he say whether or not it is a fact that registrations at the national employment service offices for the month of February show an increase of 16,000 compared with the previous reported period of January 15, 1959?

Mr. Starr: In answer to that question I want to advise the hon. member that registrations at the national employment service offices in March show a decrease of 65,707 from a year ago, or 7.6 per cent.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): May I ask the minister, in view of his reply, if the figures he gave out this morning are inaccurate when they show that as of January 15, 1959 there were 775,658 compared with 791,210 as of February 19, 1959?

Mr. Starr: The figures I gave the hon. member in reply were more up to date.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If they are more up to date, will the minister explain why he issued this morning the figures I have just given to the house? What the hon. gentleman has done is not to take the people of Canada—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): —and this parliament into his confidence with regard to these figures.

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, the procedure followed in the compilation of these figures is the same as was established by hon. members opposite when they formed the government, and we are not changing it one bit. In mid-February the dominion bureau of statistics figure is given and so, in comparison, is the mid-February figure of national employment service registrations, but as the head of the department I get up to date figures every week.

INQUIRY AS TO EXTENSION OF FEDERAL
WINTER WORKS PROGRAM

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Trinity): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. Has the minister given further consideration to the possibility of extending the emergency winter work program?