

Inquiries of the Ministry

unemployment situation has improved. It may be of further interest, as the figures show, to note that the unemployment situation is to a significant extent a regional one.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Woolliams: It is all over the country.

Mr. MacEachen: I think it is a tribute to the discernment of the government that such a high priority has been placed on the regional economic expansion plan of the minister.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I asked the minister if he would in the near future make a statement on a specific point. I did not ask for a partisan speech in reply to a question which I did not ask.

I would repeat the question, Mr. Speaker. I ask whether the minister will consider making a statement in the near future on the point about which I asked him.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I will be delighted to consider making a non-political statement to the political question that has been asked.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Would the minister who has just said that the number of unemployed has decreased, explain why the number of people on welfare has increased in proportion to that of the unemployed?

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that the hon. member's question might give rise to a debate. I feel we have started the discussion proposed by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), and we could now go back to questions.

CANADIAN CONFEDERATION**SUGGESTED STEPS TO PROMOTE NATIONAL UNITY**

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct to the Secretary of State a question which I could as well ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Last night, I was present at a meeting in Montreal of the Pro-Canada Association, and I heard a choir made up of 80 teenagers from Trois-Rivières. Would the Secretary of State be prepared, for the sake of national unity, to foster a tour of that group all across Canada?

Mr. Speaker: This question should be put on the order paper.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

[*English*]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**HAL BANKS—POSSIBILITY OF RENEWING EXTRADITION PROCEEDINGS**

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. On Tuesday last I asked the Prime Minister, in view of the statement by the Secretary of State of the United States clearly indicating that the new government is waiting for an application for the extradition of Mr. Hal Banks, and as the Ontario government has clearly indicated that it wishes to have Mr. Hal Banks back here so that he can be prosecuted for perjury, to indicate what action is being taken by the government to put forward this application for extradition. The Prime Minister answered that the Minister of Justice would answer the question. As the minister has had two full days to consider this matter, may we have a full answer to this very important question?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): I will be glad to reply to that speech, Mr. Speaker. As I informed hon. members in this house on November 20 last during the debate on the estimates on the Department of Justice, the legal officers of the Department of Justice are of the opinion that, as a matter of law, the Banks case is closed since the extradition proceedings in the United States have been exhausted. That conclusion was arrived at in consultation with American counsel, namely Mr. Richard Kuh in New York City. Mr. Kuh was the counsel who acted for the government of Ontario in the extradition proceedings.

United States Senator Fannin met with Secretary of State William Rogers on Monday of last week and the Senator is quoted in the press to the effect that the position taken by Mr. Rogers is that nothing much could be done to reopen the case in the absence of a request from Canada. If what was said at this meeting has been fully and accurately reported, the position would appear to be that a further request for extradition by the government of Canada might result in further steps being taken by the government of the United States. This was what prompted the hon. member's question.

An hon. Member: You are right so far.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder whether the minister would not agree that the statement