

Inquiries of the Ministry

co-operation we can help alleviate the economic difficulties of the country, but I repeat again this is not to say that any measures we want to take in the meantime will not be taken because of the late date of the conference.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as the previous municipal winter works program which was very valuable, as everyone knows, was discontinued without reference to a federal-provincial conference, would the Prime Minister consider reinstating it and making an announcement about it within the next few days?

Mr. Trudeau: I do not believe the assessment made by the hon. member that the previous program was very valuable is shared by everyone in this country, least of all by the municipalities themselves. They found that very often it was a wasteful program and asked the federal government to bring in better measures, which we did, and we have the manpower retraining program.

[Translation]

SUGGESTED ABOLITION OF EXCISE TAX AS STIMULANT

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

Does the government intend to remove the 12 per cent excise tax in order to boost the Canadian economy?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member suggests it, we will consider it.

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT—INQUIRY AS TO PREPARATION OF
WINTER WORKS PROGRAM BY GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENTS

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Prime Minister whether he has asked a number of government departments, specifically Public Works and Regional Economic Development, to prepare a winter works program? If so, could he give us an understanding of the expectations he has set for the departments in question?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there may be some misunderstanding about the use of the words "winter works". I take it that when this phrase is used reference is made to a previous program which existed in this country for a period of years. When I say that this particular program is one which was discontinued by the government, this does not mean that some program for work in winter will not be envisaged by the government. But I want to make it clear to the hon. member that the winter works program of which he seems to be speaking is not necessarily a program for work in the winter which of course is one we would envisage.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the question in clearer terms. Has the Prime Minister asked any government department to prepare any specific programs for this winter aimed at alleviating unemployment? If so, can the House be apprised of the expectations.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes; I believe a fortnight ago I informed the House that I had consulted several ministers responsible for economic matters in the country and asked them to give their immediate and deep attention to the problem of providing more work during the winter months. As I said, if an announcement has to be made as a result of their decisions it will be made in the House.

Mr. Lundrigan: A further supplementary, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member wishes to ask a third supplementary. I will recognize him but perhaps he will allow the Chair to go to the next question thereafter. There are about ten minutes left before the end of the question period.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister is investigating the increase in the Canadian population which he announced a few weeks ago, would he also investigate the reason for the decrease from 840,000 to 648,000 in placements by the manpower department between 1966 and 1971 even though the budget increased by 50 per cent during those years?

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

ASSISTANCE TO POTATO GROWERS—DISCUSSION
BETWEEN FEDERAL AND CERTAIN PROVINCIAL
MINISTERS—QUEBEC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Referring to his statement of last Friday that he was to meet the agriculture ministers of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia regarding the difficulties which are facing potato producers, I would like to ask the minister whether the meeting was held and, if not, whether the provinces interested in that kind of production will be invited to discuss and find a solution to the problems of the producers.

[English]

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Yes, Mr. Speaker. The meeting started at five minutes to eight this morning. There were a number of alternative suggestions made, some of which cause us some difficulty in our international trade which they are now aware of. However, the officials of the provincial Departments of Agriculture and my department will continue to try to find an acceptable solution to alleviate this problem.

[Translation]

Mr. La Salle: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the minister whether representatives from Quebec were present at that meeting. If not, did Quebec make representations asking for federal assistance, considering the nature of the problems involved?

[English]

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I think I ought to explain to the hon. member that this meeting was held this morning at the request of the two provincial Ministers of Agriculture who wished to come to Ottawa to have a meeting with me.