

Inquiries of the Ministry

order to give the provinces more latitude in meeting the unemployment crisis as well as permitting the advancement of various types of social assistance, which is impossible under existing legislation or inadequate where the legislation does permit such assistance?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we are meeting with the welfare ministers next week and I expect that this will be a subject of discussion.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Acting Prime Minister would clarify his answer. When he said that there were to be discussions with the provinces, was he referring to the general unemployment insurance amendments represented by the White Paper that was published, or was he referring to amendments of an emergency nature to deal with unemployment in the next two or three months of this winter?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the provinces have expressed an interest in the proposals to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, and they would be interested in any amendments whether temporary or permanent. As the hon. member knows, if we were to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act in the way he suggested it would have an impact on the future of the plan.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, would the Acting Prime Minister therefore inform the House whether the discussions are to involve the making of early emergency amendments, or are the discussions related to something that will happen some months hence?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that we can bring the unemployment insurance legislation before the House reasonably soon. Discussions are taking place, of course, with respect to the white paper that has been tabled.

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH—CANADA COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE—FEDERAL OFFICIALS PARTICIPATING

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. In view of the fact that the Canadian Council on Social Development has just indicated that the youth problem is of an explosive nature and that they expect to hold a conference around the end of February, can the Acting Prime Minister indicate who the appropriate federal officials will be who will be taking part in this conference?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate.

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Acting Prime Minister is extremely busy and has to deal with many matters that must be brought to his attention, but I think unemployment is one concern about which the House and the nation are very anxious. I would ask the Acting Prime Minister, in view of the fact that the Canadian Council on Social Development has indicated that youth unemployment has reached explosive proportions, whether he would indicate who will be

[Mr. Baldwin.]

the appropriate federal ministers or officials who will attend the conference sponsored by the council, to be held about the middle or end of February?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): We have had representations from the council, Mr. Speaker, and this proposal is under consideration. I cannot answer the question until the cabinet have considered the matter.

UNEMPLOYMENT—SUGGESTED EMERGENCY MEETING WITH PROVINCES

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the only meetings scheduled with the provinces are meetings with the welfare ministers some time later this month, would the Acting Prime Minister give consideration to holding an emergency meeting with the provinces and specifically designating unemployment as the critical area for discussion? I ask this question because most Canadians are not prepared to wait till spring for the promise of the Minister of Finance to be realized in view of the manifestation yesterday in Victoria—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lundrigan: Perhaps the Acting Prime Minister has some urgent matter on his mind that is taking up his attention this morning.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has asked a question. If there is no reply I suggest he cannot ask it a second time. It may be that the Acting Prime Minister did not hear the question, but I doubt whether it is in order to repeat it.

An hon. Member: Is there anybody responsible for unemployment over there?

Mr. Lundrigan: Maybe I should repeat it.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I misunderstood your action in the House. I thought you were rising to say this was in the nature of a representation rather than a question, but if the hon. member will repeat his question I will be very happy to try to answer it.

Mr. Lundrigan: I know we have a very competent Speaker, but we also have an aspiring Speaker in the House today. I repeat my question to the Acting Prime Minister. Will he consider an emergency meeting with the provinces in addition to the planned meeting with the welfare ministers to discuss immediate plans of action to try to at least ease the burden of unemployment in Canada, in view of the Victoria crisis yesterday and the impending problem in Quebec mentioned by Mr. Cournoyer some time ago?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. gentleman that the question of unemployment and the payment of welfare to those unemployed will be a matter of first importance in the discussions to be held next week.