

## Oral Questions

[Translation]

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

## USE OF UNEMPLOYED IN HARVESTING WITHOUT LOSS OF BENEFITS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

Considering that people from the West Indies came to Canada to work in the crop fields—I have nothing against that—but considering also that the government pays their travelling expenses as well as their shelter expenses, would the minister consider inviting Canadians unemployed and on social welfare to work in the crop fields without losing their present benefits?

[English]

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, to correct one aspect of the hon. gentleman's preamble, the payment of transportation for offshore foreign seasonal workers is borne by the worker himself and the employer, and I can assure him we do not subscribe to the idea of picking up the cost of that, although we do the organizational and informational work at government expense. We are certainly recruiting from every place we can unemployed Canadians to fill these jobs. In fact, in southern Ontario we have supplied some 18,000 of the 36,000 workers who are there now, and we will continue to invite Canadian workers to take these jobs on every possible occasion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

We hear every day in the Montreal area on radio and television that apple, carrot, tomato and cucumber crops presently stand to be lost. Farmers are asking for manpower but the unemployed do not want to go because they fear they will lose their benefits. Could the minister not make exceptions particularly at this time of the year to allow those workers to receive their benefits while at the same time working at jobs offered by farmers?

[English]

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, I think the Unemployment Insurance Act would be violated if we were to permit those receiving benefits to earn money beyond the top limit that is permissible under the act. In fact, if there are people on unemployment insurance who refuse to take those jobs under certain well-known conditions their benefits would, of course, be challenged.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

Since a good number of Canadians are holding two jobs at the present time and contributing to the unemployment insurance fund in both instances, does the minister intend to review the Unemployment Insurance Act or at least conduct a study of the matter in order that Canadians who have the heart to work at two jobs not be penalized?

[English]

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think we would be disposed at this time to dictate to Canadians whether or not they can hold more than one job. That would have to be the subject of a great deal of examination.

If I may supplement my answer to the previous speaker, we are prepared to share with the provinces the transportation cost of Canadian workers to these agricultural locations he has described. In fact, this has been done in many cases where we pay 50 per cent of the transportation cost and the province pays the other half.

[Translation]

**Mr. Fortin:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.

**Mr. Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I feel that in answering the question, the minister misled the House, because Canadians who are seeking employment themselves are not remunerated by the manpower centre but only those who found a job through that centre. But Canadians who try to find a job themselves are penalized.

[English]

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the statement made in the House on Tuesday by the Prime Minister will be about as effective in bringing down rising prices as was the budget brought down in the House by the Minister of Finance last February, as evidenced by the fact that the price of bread will continue to rise—

● (1500)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member should now ask his question. He is obviously making a speech rather than asking a question.

**Mr. Andras:** On a point of order—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I believe we should try to make some headway. The minister is rising on a point of order. We would recognize that if every member asked a question that had a preamble to it, we would be unfair to other members waiting to ask questions. The Chair will recognize the minister on his point of order.

**Mr. Andras:** Mr. Speaker, I did not mislead the House. What I was trying to convey, and what I did convey, was that the Department of Manpower and Immigration, in conjunction with the provincial governments, paid 50 per cent of the transportation costs of workers from their home locations to agricultural centres; that is, for workers seeking jobs. I did not say we paid their salaries.

**Mr. Stanfield:** With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, that is not a point of order and the minister—

**Some hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Leader of the Opposition will appreciate, at the same time, that the point raised by the hon. member for Lotbinière was not a point of