Inquiries of the Ministry

An hon. Member: Look, he is joking and smirking.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: Why don't you at least try to act like a Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he would now agree that it is the policy of his government to deliberately create unemployment in the course of fighting inflation?

Mr. Trudeau: What does the hon. member think?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I direct a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the construction industry probably has a greater economic multiplier effect than any other industry in the country, is the government giving any consideration to reintroducing the hospital construction grants and vocational training school construction grants and extending the housing program in order to reduce the very serious level of unemployment which has now reached well over half a million?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, some days ago the minister responsible for housing indicated that the budget for housing would be considerably expanded.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the fact that unemployment has now reached 6½ per cent and the cost of living in February had gone up 5 per cent over last year, I should like to ask how much higher the cost of living has to go and how much more unemployment must we have before the government will recognize that its program is not working and reverse it?

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As unemployment has continued to rise at an accelerated rate despite the government's program which the Prime Minister has mentioned, are he and the government now willing to consider the constructive propositions and proposals put forward by the opposition for increasing employment through constructive measures?

An hon. Member: What are they?

UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASE—USE OF WORKERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the figures that have just been stated regarding unemployment, could he advise the House whether it is still his intention, as in other years, to import and bring into Canada people from offshore countries such as Jamaica, France and Belgium, particularly in view of the difficulties that students are having in finding employment this summer?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we propose to continue bringing in a relatively small number of labourers from the Caribbean. We do this because the Canadian labour market is not capable of providing for this need at the particular time. I do not regard this movement as one that is taking jobs away from available Canadians. If I did have that view I would not support the program.

Mr. Hales: I have a supplementary question. Would the minister give the unemployed people in Canada the opportunity to fill these jobs?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend knows, there is a very heavy seasonal demand for labourers in agriculture, especially in Ontario. Every effort will be made this summer, as has been done in the past, to recruit Canadian employees where they are available for these job openings. My hon. friend can be assured of that.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Prime Minister. Does he not now consider—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Oxford.

Mr. Hees: I will be back.

UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASE—SPEEDIER PROCESSING OF INSURANCE CLAIMS

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Would the minister increase his already good efforts to try to persuade the Unemployment Insurance Commission to expedite even more the handling of unemployment insurance claims which is a very serious problem in the industrial areas.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, in the Oshawa area we