

Oral Questions

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Yes Mr. Speaker, I believe the western world is facing a very serious energy crunch. Most experts forecast that it will occur some time in the mid-1980's, at which time oil will not be available in the quantities the western nations have built their economies upon.

Mr. Hogan: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of that statement will the minister get together with the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and increase coal production in Cape Breton by opening new coal mines because we in Nova Scotia pay more for imported oil than any other province?

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

BRITISH COLUMBIA—ACTION TO PREVENT DELAYS IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS

Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Since the October 1 decision by the British Columbia Department of Human Resources to deny welfare benefits to those entitled to unemployment insurance benefits, what steps has the minister taken to streamline the processing of UIC claims in order to prevent the lengthy delays that prompted the decision of the B.C. government?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, some time ago we took action to see that the provinces, and particularly departments of welfare, would have an opportunity to make these advances and make some arrangement with the commission in order that cheques could be paid and they would be reimbursed so that there would not be a double payment of UI and welfare. I hope the British Columbia government will take advantage of that specific move.

Mr. Johnston: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can we assume that all existing manpower offices will shortly be able to handle UIC claims?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that is going to be one of the strengths of the integration of manpower in UI offices so that we can have a one-step and a one-stop service and individuals, we hope, will find the administration even better than it is now.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON INDEXING OF PENSIONS—DATE OF PUBLICATION OF REPORT OF ACTUARIAL CONSULTANTS

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the President of the Treasury Board. In light of the statement attributed to him last Septem-

ber to the effect that in his view the indexing formula may have to be changed so that increases in the public service pension will trail slightly behind the consumer price index and the statement attributed to the Prime Minister in a letter to one of the public service unions endorsing the principle of full indexation, was the minister expressing a view of the government at that time, is he floating a balloon or is something causing him or the Prime Minister to change the policy of the government in this respect and if so, what?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, there is no difference of opinion between the Prime Minister and myself on this matter. We respect the principle of protecting the purchasing power of retirement incomes. We are obviously awaiting the report of the independent actuarial consultants as to the efficacy and future projection of the financing of the Public Service pension plan, including indexation. We will make our decisions when we receive that report. In the interests of public servants enjoying pensions now and in the future, we want to ensure that the plan is properly financed. Based on that report we will have to address ourselves to the amount of indexation that is financially possible.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In other words, the minister is saying the views he expressed in late September were not based on the report, suggesting that the report is not yet in his hands. I wonder whether he can tell the House when he expects that report and whether it will be made public immediately upon receipt in his office.

● (1502)

Mr. Andras: The report is not yet available. I expect it shortly, but I cannot give the hon. member a precise date. Of course, I have made a commitment in this House that it will be made public when we receive it.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF MINISTER'S STATEMENT PLAN IS BASED ON INSURANCE PRINCIPLE IN VIEW OF DEFICIT

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It concerns the apparent flood of advertisements appearing in newspapers and magazines extolling the virtues of the unemployment insurance system. I want to ask the minister about the statement in the advertisements that unemployment insurance is not another kind of welfare but it is like any other kind of insurance. I want to know how that can be when we are told that the deficit is \$1.7 billion for the current fiscal year, which will be borne by all taxpayers whether they are entitled to benefits or not.

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is playing fast