

Inquiries of the Ministry

In view of the fact that the National Harbours Board, with the approval of the government, has rented the grain elevators to an American company, the Bunge Company of New York, is the minister aware that a hundred employees of such elevators have been laid off quite recently and is it his intention to take measures to find out the reasons for such mass lay-offs?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the grain elevators of Quebec have been transferred to the Bunge Company under the contract that has been signed. We are confident, I would even say highly confident, that this will increase employment in grain elevators.

We are now going through a transition period which will last a few weeks. I think that it is too soon to answer the hon. member's question.

Mr. Caouette: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister aware that some employees with 14, 15 and even 20 years of service have been laid off and can he tell us if they will be the first to be hired should the company decide to increase the number of employees?

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, we are interested in what happens to the employees. It is likely that within a few weeks I will be able to give the hon. member a more definite answer.

[*English*]

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT RESPECTING
NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether he could comment on the status of the half million people who are unemployed; and does he have any answers?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question as asked is not in order.

HOUSING

TORONTO—INQUIRY AS TO STEPS TO
MEET SHORTAGE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to

the Minister of Labour who is responsible for housing. In view of the drastic situation and the shortage of houses, particularly in Toronto and the surrounding area, where families have to be housed in one of the armoury buildings because of the shortage of housing, can the minister advise the house what steps are being taken to relieve this serious situation?

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I hope to make a statement on the subject of housing within the next few days, in the new session. I have nothing to say on the subject today.

PUBLIC SERVICE

SUPERANNUATED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES—
REQUEST FOR INCREASED PENSIONS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister—I assume he has gone to the other place—may I direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the recommendation in the report tabled this morning by the special joint committee on the public service of Canada for increases in the pensions of retired civil servants, may I ask whether the government will consider taking action on this matter early in the new session?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of National Revenue and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, of course I have not as yet read the report, as it is the product of the committee, but I can assure my hon. friend that as always the government will give the committee's report due consideration.

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Minister of Justice. In view of the statement made by the premier of Quebec would the government not review its position—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether the hon. member might not ask his question later on, or perhaps put it on the order paper.

Mr. Baldwin: I will take it up later on, Mr. Speaker.