

ago, but in the absence of both these ministers I will direct my question to the Prime Minister.

In view of what is described as an unusually large increase in unemployment between the months of September and October, bringing the seasonally adjusted rate to the highest point in the last three years, is the government in the next few days planning to introduce measures to stimulate employment and overcome this serious trend?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, all economic and financial measures of the government are designed and will continue to be designed to stimulate employment and maintain it at a high level, and to keep unemployment from reaching the high level which was customary at the time the government of which my hon. friend was such a distinguished member was in office.

Mr. Hees: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As the Prime Minister knows, and as we all know, unemployment usually rises at this time of the year, but this is described by the bureau of statistics as an unusually large jump. Does the Prime Minister not consider it serious that we have now reached the highest seasonally adjusted rate in the past three years, and does the government not intend to do anything about the situation?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I consider any increase to be serious.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Fisheries and ask him whether he intends to put into effect the declaration just now made by the Prime Minister by travelling through British Columbia by himself or with his colleague, the Minister of Labour, to meet representatives of the fishing industry to find alternative employment for those who have been put out of work by the closure of the herring fishery.

Hon. H.-J. Robichaud (Minister of Fisheries): It is true that I did receive a request to go to British Columbia and meet the united fishermen and allied workers union to discuss this matter and particularly the matter of amending the unemployment insurance regulations. The latter subject has been discussed with the Unemployment Insurance Commission and I regret to advise the hon. member that this request was not accepted by the commission.

27053—257

Inquiries of the Ministry

Furthermore, I may add that this is not the first time that herring fishermen on the west coast have been unemployed for part of a fishing season. Last spring halibut fishermen were also prevented from operating for a number of weeks. I am fully aware that in the past years there has been a series of stoppages of operation by the herring fishermen and others due to no fault of the Department of Fisheries. The closing of the herring fishing areas for a matter of a few weeks is for conservation purposes only.

Mr. Howard: I wonder if I could ask, by way of a supplementary question, whether the minister would mind answering my first question and not beat around the bush with a lot of extraneous matters.

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): I have a supplementary question related to the question asked by the hon. member for Northumberland. In view of the serious lay-offs which have taken place very recently in the cement industry, the railways and the garment industry in Manitoba, will the Prime Minister say what the government intends to do to alleviate this very serious situation?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member knows the opinion which I took the liberty of expressing yesterday. I think this type of general question is an invitation to the government to make a statement which normally should be made on motions.

Mr. Simpson: May I rephrase my question. I wonder if the Prime Minister could say what the government intends to do with regard to the lay-offs that have taken place in Manitoba recently.

Mr. Pearson: I am sure the provincial government of Manitoba views these lay-offs very seriously, just as we do.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): May I put a more specific question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Having regard to the fact that the number of unemployed has increased by some 60,000 in the month of October as compared with October of last year, is the government planning to expand its retraining program in the light of these higher unemployment figures?

Mr. Pearson: I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have spent \$135 million already this year for the retraining program, which is more than ever was spent before. We intend to use this program to the maximum possible extent.