

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

**Mr. Stanfield:**—I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government itself is now convinced that further immediate measures are required to create jobs?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** The economic policy of the government is always under review and if it is considered necessary to make changes they will be announced.

**Mr. Stanfield:** In view of warnings for several months that unemployment was not declining as had been presupposed by the budget, and yesterday's figures having removed any doubt at all, I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the Prime Minister saw to it that there was a contingency plan to put into effect and, if so, when will that plan come into action?

**Mr. Sharp:** The government has been just as aware of the developing economic situation as the opposition and perhaps has access to more of the facts. I would not hesitate to say that the government is prepared to change its policy if such a course seems to be desirable, but there are no simple solutions. A simple solution such as cutting taxes in order to stimulate the economy is such a popular measure that we would have adopted it long since if it had been the easiest and most acceptable way of achieving appropriate results.

**Mr. Stanfield:** I take it it is plain the government has no such contingency plan. In light of the figures released yesterday with regard to the increase in the cost of living, would the minister not at least give an undertaking on behalf of the government that the escalation freeze of 2 per cent on the guaranteed income supplement for old age pensioners will be removed so that at least that amount of justice can be rendered to the older people of this country.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena):** Since the July index of industrial production showed a decline, as well as the value of manufactured shipments, which in Ontario alone declined by 19.1 per cent in a period which preceded the application of the 10 per cent surtax by the United States, may I ask whether these circumstances would not motivate the government into trying to do something—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):**—instead of just covering up?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

• (11:40 p.m.)

UNEMPLOYMENT—PRESENTATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTIONS AND PROGRAMS AT CONFERENCE WITH PREMIERS

**Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East):** I have a supplementary question for the Acting Prime Minister. Has the government assured the premiers that at the forthcoming conference with the premiers the federal government will spell out, as requested by the provinces, the government's projections for unemployment this winter and next year? Further, will the government at the conference present specific programs to curb winter unemployment?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, just what will be on the agenda for this meeting is something that has to be decided by the Prime Ministers of the provinces and the federal government. I would certainly hesitate at this time to lay down an agenda; I am sure that my hon. friend would want the Prime Ministers of the provinces to have a say.

**Mr. McGrath:** When the matter was first discussed with the premiers was the question of an agenda for the conference discussed? If so, has there been a tentative agreement with the premiers on an agenda?

**Mr. Sharp:** Mr. Speaker, it is not customary to decide on an agenda until closer to the time of the meeting. There are many changes that are taking place and, as the hon. member is aware, some that have taken place since the meeting was planned.

[Translation]

OLD AGE SECURITY—LOWERING OF PENSIONABLE AGE TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Acting Prime Minister.

As a policy establishing at 60 the eligibility for old age pension would increase by more than 50 per cent the unemployment rate, would the Acting Prime Minister say whether this government has considered bringing as soon as possible a measure to that effect?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Joliette wish to put another supplementary?

**Mr. La Salle:** I am under the impression, Mr. Speaker, that the Acting Prime Minister has not understood my question, and since we are seeking a solution to unemployment, and since I believe that I have one, I should like to put my question once again.

Since I think that the payment of the old age pension at 60 could reduce unemployment by over 50 per cent, I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government has considered taking such a step?

[English]

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** No, Mr. Speaker.

UNEMPLOYMENT—FORMULATION OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMS TO ALLEVIATE PROBLEM IN CONJUNCTION WITH PROVINCES AND MUNICIPALITIES

**Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the significance of the figures indicated yesterday by the Prime Minister, and in view of the well known seasonal increase in unemployment in the winter months, can the Acting Prime Minister indicate if plans are presently being formulated for specific proposals and programs to work with the provinces and municipalities in order to alleviate very serious unemployment later this year?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, a wide range of possibilities is under study, yes.