

Inquiries of the Ministry

that by way of a statement on motions. He should reply to the question as briefly as possible without going into details.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I just want to give one more figure if I may, because a few months ago the hon. member, Prince George of Hastings, was about to make a—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister said he wanted to terminate his reply. It seems to me he was not doing so. He was referring to a previous question. I invite the minister to conclude his reply, if he wants to, as quickly as possible because obviously we will be running short of time.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, last year there was a decline of manufactured products in our export content of about 3 per cent. It is well remembered that some hon. members tried to make a national crisis of this. I explained fully at that time why we had that decline. I am eager to report to the House that we have reached 40.4 per cent now in the manufactured content of our exports. So there was no crisis then and there is none now. On the contrary.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if everything is going as well as the minister just indicated with regard to—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pepin: I was talking only about exports.

Mr. Stanfield: If everything is going so well with regard to the manufacture of exports in Canada, how does the minister explain the unseasonal decline in the manufacturing industry in this country between the months of March and April?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about exports. The question was about exports and I answered about exports.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pepin: If the hon. member has another question to ask, he should ask it. I was answering the question that was asked.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**STEPS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITHOUT BENEFITS**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. In view of the increased thousands now who are out of work because of the prolonged period of unemployment, which number

[Mr. Speaker.]

will be added to at the end of this week as a result of the curtailment of seasonal benefits, can the minister inform the House whether special, emergency steps are being taken to provide additional benefits for the thousands affected by the level of unemployment?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday, to be precise, to an hon. member, "I am sure the hon. member would not want to mislead the House in that regard." He was talking about something else. I also said, "I have no intention at present of extending seasonal benefits beyond May 15." This means that the people on unemployment insurance will be drawing benefits until the end of May. This is the significance of the May 15 date. They will draw benefits for two weeks following May 15. Extending seasonal benefits will do nothing for people presently unemployed and not drawing unemployment insurance as a result of the rather stringent regulations which make it impossible for many people who have been out of work for a long time to draw unemployment insurance. Nevertheless, I am aware of the situation and have asked for a full report from the department. I must bring to the attention of the House that the hon. member's suggestion would require a change in the Unemployment Insurance Act as well as an increase in the rates and would do nothing at all for people presently unemployed and who are not on unemployment insurance benefits, seasonal or otherwise.

Mr. Broadbent: After listening to that rather prolonged answer from the minister may I ask whether he will, after he has looked into the situation, inform the House, say by next Tuesday at the latest, of what he has decided to do?

Mr. Mackasey: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That decision will be based on the facts, figures and statistics which the department is putting together.

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[Translation]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASE—MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF UNIONS AND INDUSTRY TO FIND SOLUTION**

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Prime Minister a question.

Referring to a question asked a few weeks ago on the need to call a meeting of representatives of labour unions and the whole economic sector for the purpose of obtaining suggestions to curb unemployment, the Prime Minister answered that he did not deem this necessary at that time. In view of the present unemployment situation, which seems to be out of the government's control, could the Prime Minister tell the House whether the need for such a meeting at all these levels has not become evident today?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member certainly remembers that one reason why we should hesitate before taking such a step is that