

UNEMPLOYMENT—TORONTO—EFFECTIVENESS OF
GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina): I have a supplementary question for the Acting Prime Minister resulting from his answer to my first question. Will the time lag on the government's construction program to which he referred be less than three months, and how will the program help the Toronto area in the winter months?

UNEMPLOYMENT—EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR
WELFARE BENEFITS UNDER CANADA
ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister a supplementary question. On December 10 I asked the Prime Minister a question relating to the disastrous increase in welfare costs to the municipalities and communities in Canada arising from increasing unemployment. At that time, the Prime Minister said that the problem was being considered. Can the Acting Prime Minister now say whether the government has considered the possibility of discussing with the provinces the expansion of rights and eligibility for social welfare assistance coming under the Canada Assistance Plan?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): As the hon. member probably knows, a meeting is scheduled for later this month with the provincial welfare ministers, at which time I am sure this question will be raised.

UNEMPLOYMENT—REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
ON FORECASTS

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): My supplementary question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the government's forecasting machinery has gone seriously awry, has the government made any new estimates and forecasts of the expected unemployment parameters? Would the Acting Prime Minister be prepared, in co-operation with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, to make these estimates available to the Canadian people and members of the House of Commons?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): As I recollect, the Minister of Finance in his budget speech forecast the course of events. He forecast a steady reduction in seasonally adjusted unemployment during 1971. We have no reason to change this forecast.

Mr. Lundrigan: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate on a point of order, but I suggest that perhaps we might give other hon. members an opportunity to take part in the question period after I have recognized the hon. member.

Mr. Lundrigan: I would like to say for the record that the Minister of Finance did say that the unemployment picture—

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that this is a point of debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Lundrigan: On a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member now wishes to rise on a question of privilege, I understand.

Mr. Lundrigan: The Acting Prime Minister, in giving information to the House, is certainly misrepresenting the words of the Minister of Finance—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

UNEMPLOYMENT—ACCELERATION OF PUBLIC
WORKS PROJECTS

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. I wish to ask the hon. gentleman whether anything has been placed in the Public Works coffers since December 15 in view of the very serious unemployment situation?

An hon. Member: Wake him up.

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Public Works): Yes, a sum of \$23 million has been made available. In addition, we are accelerating the work under way not only in the Maritimes and in Quebec; we are also bringing forward in the Prairie Provinces and in the province of British Columbia work which we had intended to do later.

Mr. McGrath: Hear, hear. That is the only responsible answer we have received today.

UNEMPLOYMENT—FORECAST FOR MARCH, 1971

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): My question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the estimate by responsible academic economists that the number of unemployed by March of this year will be over 750,000, could the Minister of Finance indicate to the House whether the estimates prepared by his department confirm or reject this estimate?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): This question was raised a little earlier. In my budget speech I said that I felt seasonally adjusted unemployment had peaked and would gradually work downwards. I also said that there may be month to month fluctuations from the trend, and one-tenth of one per cent represents a month to month fluctuation.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think we should now give an opportunity to the hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton.

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HEALTH

REPORTED REJECTION BY ONTARIO OF CERTAIN DRUGS
APPROVED BY FEDERAL DEPARTMENT

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I will direct my question to the minister answering for the