

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Another budget in April?

Mr. Benson: Maybe in March.

[Later:]

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance arising out of an answer he gave just a moment or two ago in which he suggested that the government had not made any public statement as to the forecast of unemployment. I should like to ask him whether the government has made any estimate of likely unemployment, either actual, seasonally adjusted or both, for this year and, if so, would he please inform the House what that estimate is?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, periodically the government does estimate what is going to happen over a period of time, but it is not the practice in this House, nor has it ever been the practice, to make these assumptions public as they are just assumptions.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Finance. Inasmuch as the government and the minister are not averse to making forecasts in respect of housing starts, the gross national product and other types of economic activity, why will he not disclose his estimate of levels of unemployment? Is he embarrassed or ashamed of it?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Benson: No, it is done during the budget speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member and the minister that we are now entering the field of argument.

UNEMPLOYMENT—ROLE OF PROVINCES IN COPING WITH RECESSIONS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, in the minister's invitation to the provinces to finance further unemployment assistance, was he introducing a federal constitutional proposal that the federal government should have the fiscal and monetary power to create recessions and the provinces the responsibility to find the resources to cope with them?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is wrong. I simply pointed out to the provinces that the bond market had improved greatly because of the actions taken by the government over the past year, that it was possible for them now to get money in Canada to proceed with public works, which was not a possibility a year ago, and that by borrowing in Canada they assist the whole Canadian economy because this does not put upward pressure on the Canadian dollar.

[Mr. Benson.]

[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION—REPORT ON DEFENCE MEASURES TAKEN BY REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Could he tell us whether the Canadian government, as a member of the International Control Commission, has received a copy of a report on the measures taken by the Republic of Viet Nam, to ensure its own defence, and would he table this report in the House?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): As I said in the House the other day, Mr. Speaker, we have asked for meetings of the International Control Commission. Informal meetings are now proceeding. Just what the content of these discussions will be we do not know yet.

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): I wonder if the minister could indicate as well whether there has been any communication from the two original co-chairmen of the Geneva conference on whether or not they have made any progress with regard to the reconvening of that conference in terms of bringing a period of peace and stability to southeast Asia?

Mr. Sharp: We have called for a meeting of the ICC. We expect it will be held. Just how far the Indian and Polish members will co-operate with us in investigating all of the breaches of the neutrality of Laos, I do not yet know.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT—BUREAU OF STATISTICS SEASONALLY ADJUSTED FIGURE FORMULA—STATEMENT BY MANPOWER MINISTER

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the press statement tabled by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce today states that a new method is being incorporated by DBS for dealing with seasonally adjusted figures, would the Acting Prime Minister repudiate on behalf of the government the erroneous statement made by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration yesterday that this was not the case?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): As I understood the allegation of the opposition yesterday, it was that the government has directed the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to make changes. That is completely unfounded. The Dominion statistician, I am sure, would resign if there were any interference with the publication of these figures.