

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): I am sure the representation the hon. member has made on behalf of the unemployed, who suffer severely as a result of less than satisfactory benefits, will be drawn to the attention of the provinces as well since they have an important role to play in respect of the approval of this particular legislation. Nothing has changed my position as expressed in the House several days ago that the proposed new legislation will be before the House of Commons by the date I specified, namely, July 1, 1971.

OPPORTUNITY TO OPT OUT OF NEW LEGISLATION

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Labour. In view of the fact that he has mentioned the opportunity for the province of Quebec to opt out of certain aspects of the plan, and since there will be a tremendous cost to provincial governments and local school boards if teachers are brought under the new unemployment insurance legislation, does this mean they will also have an opportunity to opt out?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): I want to apologize to members of the House if I left the inference that a province could opt out per se. I said there would be provision for any province to opt out as an employer. With regard to the added cost to the province in respect of the universality feature by the inclusion of additional costs to school boards, this is more than offset by the fact that hundreds of thousands of people will no longer remain on the welfare rolls and thus be a direct burden on the province and the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan. Because of the increased benefits, people will at least be able to survive or live on the unemployment insurance benefit alone and not need supplementation by welfare.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond on a supplementary, but then I think we should go to a new item and recognize the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands. Then, perhaps we could return to the hon. member for Hamilton West and the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate after we have completed a round of original questions.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, since the minister only emphasized the preface to my question in that he referred to the co-operation of the provincial governments along with the local school boards, may I ask whether the provinces will have the opportunity to opt out of this particular category of the UIC legislation?

Mr. Mackasey: No. Universality means obviously what it says.

Mr. MacInnis: What does universality mean?

Mr. Mackasey: You have asked the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

Inquiries of the Ministry

NATIONAL DEFENCE

DESTROYER CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM—ADDITIONAL COST

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board regarding the DDH-280 class destroyer escort construction program. I should like to ask the minister whether a decision has been taken in recent days to scrap this program or is any such decision now under consideration by the government?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, no such decision has been taken. In so far as I can speak for the government, consideration is not being given at this time to scrapping the program.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the President of the Treasury Board. Can he tell the House whether there have been some 13 major design changes at a cost of some \$100 million in this construction program?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, in a construction program of this magnitude, extending over a number of years, there are bound to be design changes to avoid technological obsolescence during construction. I think probably a more adequate explanation of this will be given by the Minister of National Defence when his estimates are under discussion in committee in the relatively near future.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): In view of the fact that this program was originally to cost \$170 million and expenditures are now estimated at some \$227.7 million, may I ask the minister if either he or the Minister of National Defence will make a statement to the House fairly soon as to what the additional estimated cost is to complete this program, and is it the government's intention to complete it?

Mr. Drury: As I said, the Minister of National Defence, I think, has already indicated his intention to review this construction program with the parliamentary committee.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Yes, next month.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Could the President of the Treasury Board further advise the House whether or not the question of employment in those two river yards is a major factor in any consideration at present being given by the treasury benches with regard to the DDH-280 program? I ask that because a tremendous number of people would be thrown out of work if there were a negative decision.

Mr. Drury: The question presumes that we are proceeding to what the hon. member refers to as a negative decision. This is not the case.