

Inquiries of the Ministry

greater numbers may make use of the program during this period of high unemployment?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would not expect that item to come up in the discussions this week, although there certainly is room for constant consultation with the provinces on the question of how best to make our training and operating programs effective. I agree that the hon. member was not able to obtain some figures he wanted about the number of people who had sought training and had not been able to receive it, but we have made some changes there which may allow us to provide better information in the future.

UNEMPLOYMENT—ASSUMPTION OF GREATER SHARE OF WELFARE COSTS BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance. In view of the increase of 25 to 30 per cent in welfare costs faced by most of the provinces and cities in 1970 and in view of the estimates by both federal and provincial officials that these costs will sharply increase this year, is the federal government considering discussing with the provinces the possibility of assuming a much greater share of the cost of welfare?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should point out that as welfare costs go up the federal government's costs go up as well. As my hon. friend knows, we pay 50 per cent of the cost. This matter was discussed at the meeting with provincial ministers of health and welfare, but I am not sure whether it will be brought up at this conference.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, what I asked, and I wonder whether the minister could answer, was whether the federal government is giving consideration to increasing the percentage of its share of the cost of welfare. I am not talking of the total cost, of which as it goes up the federal government still pays 50 per cent.

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, no such decision has been made at this time.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INVASION OF LAOS BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS—SIMILAR ACTION BY NORTH VIETNAMESE—SUGGESTED INVESTIGATION BY UNITED NATIONS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and arises out of the statement that he made at the beginning of the sitting this afternoon in connection with the situation in Laos. Is it not a fact that in the past several months the North Vietnamese have been invading and infiltrating that country, and that no particular criticism has been made by members in certain parts of the House who invariably criticize any action taken by the United States or by the South Vietnamese?

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not there had been invasion, we did receive complaints from the Royal Laotian government to this effect. We tried in the International Control Commission to have an investigation put in hand and as I said in my earlier statement, we were not successful. This is why in the statement I made I pointed out that I feel the whole question of the situation in southern Laos should be the subject of investigation by the International Control Commission. We took this action on our own initiative in advance of any request.

Mr. Diefenbaker: On the basis of experience which indicates the degree to which the other two members of the International Control Commission actually have dragged their feet and refused to participate in any way, is there not something that could be done by Canada to bring this question directly before the United Nations in order to have a committee of the UN to look into the problem of Laos so as to clear up once and for all the continued condemnation of the United States and those associated with that country who are preserving us against the advance of communism in Asia?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, it is not the intention of Canada to bring this matter before the United Nations but I do understand that initiative may be taken to bring the matter before the Security Council by one of the parties mainly concerned.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Which is that?

Mr. Sharp: One of the countries concerned.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But which country?

Mr. Sharp: I am not certain, Mr. Speaker, I have heard some rumours and I do not want to prejudge the success of their application. I think it would be better for them to make their application before I announce it. I should also add that the British government has called on the Soviet government to reconvene the Geneva conference for the purpose of investigating the invasion of the neutrality of Laos.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What was the reaction of the USSR? Did they show the same contemptuous disregard that has existed in the past?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, there has been no response.

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INFORMATION CANADA

EXHIBITION BRANCH—REPORTED LEAVING OF DESIGN SECTION PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister without Portfolio in charge of Information Canada. In view of reports that the entire professional staff of the design section of the exhibition branch of Information Canada is leaving because of the difficulties under which they have