

One thing about us compared to New Democrats is that we learn from history and we are not going to repeat that mistake again.

The Speaker: Colleagues, this would bring to a close the question period.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

• (1505)

[English]

The Speaker: Order. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

December 5, 1995

Mr. Speaker

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable John Charles Major, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 5th day of December 1995, at 4.55 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.

Your sincerely,

Anthony P. Smyth,
Deputy Secretary, Policy, Program and Protocol

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: My colleague, I am informed that you have two minutes remaining in your speech. This will be followed by a five-minute question and comment period. I understand you are sharing your time with another hon. member. Is that correct?

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my wife is often astonished at how quickly and how frequently the schedule changes for a parliamentarian. This is an example of that. When I rose to speak an hour ago I said I would speaking for the full 20 minutes and now it is 10 minutes. I happy to comply and adjust my schedule again.

Before question period I was saying that the bill was a Robin Hood response to the problem we have with the UI system. In 1983 the UI system cost \$9 billion to employers and employees across Canada. Today it costs \$17 billion. The growth in the cost

Supply

of this program has represented a tax on jobs in Canada and we have to deal with it.

People in my riding tell me that it has been misused in many ways and it is time to deal with it. How do we deal with it and why am I calling it a Robin Hood response? We are dealing with this problem of reducing the cost of the program by reducing benefits for the well off who have been breaking the system for a while and increasing benefits to the poor. The low income people who have dependants will get up to 80 per cent, rather than 55 per cent of their previous income under this system. It is an important step forward and we are maintaining the program as much as possible in a very solid way for those in the middle. That is a very important point.

I want to mention the issue of involuntary part-time workers. I have been involved in the food bank movement in the Halifax area, as people in my riding would know. One thing we always complained about for low income people is the growing number of people who have to work part time because they could not find full time work. One reason for that has been the incentive provided in part by the UI system to employers to only hire part time workers, who would work less than 15 hours a week so they would not have to pay these UI benefits, for example.

• (1510)

By moving to an hourly based system where every hour counts and every hour has premiums paid on it, it means that people who are working part time will qualify for UI and the incentive for employers to hire only part time will no longer be there. These are important and positive points about this employment insurance program.

I urge all members of the House to vote against this Bloc motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech by the member for Halifax West. I was surprised, because he is from one of the Atlantic provinces, that he had no criticism of the unemployment insurance reform. His is one of the regions that will be affected most in Canada following the unemployment insurance reform. The member sees only positive effects, but his region will surely suffer negative and disastrous consequences.

I come from Latin America, and sometimes representatives of the International Monetary Fund, who travel throughout Latin America, tell governments that they must make cuts, reduce salaries or terminate unemployment insurance or social security programs. From what we see here in Canada, it looks like policy is being dictated by the International Monetary Fund or the OECD.

I would like to know the member's opinion. What does he think of the negative consequences of the system set up by the