

Unemployment Insurance Act

ly after the speech the hon. member has just made, and let me explain why I say that. I say that on the basis of the record of *Hansard* itself, which evidently he failed to read when he prepared his speech.

The Leader of the Opposition opened his speech this afternoon, and I made notes just for the fun of it—for the very fun of it, yes, indeed. He said that the bill had very serious faults and that the reason for introducing closure is deep division on this side of the House. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition of what he can find for himself on page 2222 of *Hansard* for December 18, just Monday of this week. The official critic for the Tory party, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke), quotes himself from second reading and again at the report stage. He stated:

—I said that this bill was a step in the right direction—

Having said that he goes on to say—

An hon. Member: Which Clarke is that?

Mr. Caccia: This is the Vancouver Quadra Clarke, the official critic of the Tory party. That member only three days ago went on to say:

Restraint and reform are sorely needed. We will see what happens to the amendments we put forth.

Then he concluded with this great statement of Tory policy:

We will see what happens to the amendments we put forth. Then we will make up our minds on the bill itself.

After 34 meetings of the committee, having heard all the witnesses and the amendments they have put forward, and there being, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said, ample opportunity in committee for this bill to be discussed, that hon. member on Monday in this House said:

Then we will make up our minds on the bill itself.

How can we take them seriously? At least there is one honest member in the Conservative benches who was straightforward when speaking after the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, that hon. member who said they will make up their minds on the bill itself.

On Tuesday the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) was straightforward and explicit when he said:

This bill is iniquitous. It is a bad bill, an unjust bill and an unfair bill. It is a bad bill, Mr. Speaker, and it is bad legislation.

This conclusion he arrived at after having urged the government to amend the bill. I have certainly never heard of people wanting to amend a bill that was so bad and iniquitous.

An hon. Member: To make it a better bill.

Mr. Caccia: To make it a better bill, exactly. Let us see some cohesion and consistency over there. Until the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra changes his job he is the official spokesman for the official opposition on unemployment insurance, and he is the one who said that the bill is a step in the right direction. That is what he said on Monday of this week.

Mr. Clarke: A small step, you fool.

An hon. Member: Capice?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caccia: The Leader of the Opposition went on to ask why we are forcing this bill through, as if there had not been ample opportunity for discussion in the committee. We did have ample opportunity. Members of the official opposition had ample opportunity to express their views in committee. Some, such as the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McCrossan) and the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), made a distinct effort to put forward an alternative view. We did not agree with it but we looked at it. To claim that the bill is being forced through after 34 committee meetings is stretching things too far. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would benefit from staying around here a little bit longer to find out what his colleagues are doing in committee. In making statements like that he is saying, in essence, that his colleagues have done nothing. That is not true. We have seen them work as hard as we did every day for five weeks.

● (1612)

The Leader of the Opposition also was very sarcastic about the geographic districts. Several times in his speech he made reference to one side of the Saguenay or the other side. I realize that he does not want to hear a critique of his speech because that is no fun and it is easier to criticize others. I do not blame him for engaging in conversations with another member at the present moment.

Let me remind the all-knowing Leader of the Opposition that it was the Tory party that introduced the idea of geographic districts in the discussion on Bill C-27. I believe the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) proposed it, but apparently it is no longer convenient so it is being attacked.

The Leader of the Opposition also put forward the grand scheme of the Tory party for a two-tier system, namely, that the unemployment insurance payments should differentiate between the head of a family and the secondary wage earner. There were extensive debates on this proposal in committee which are reported in the proceedings. The Tory party seems to ignore a number of facts. One is that heads of families or people alone without dependants have certain basic costs such as rent and heat which are virtually the same in both cases. Further, differentiating between the two groups would adversely affect women and young people.

Extensive studies carried out by the Unemployment Insurance Commission explained to members of the opposition—perhaps this was not reported to the Leader of the Opposition—that women without dependants make up 95 per cent of all women claimants of UIC benefits. Not only does the Tory party seem to ignore that fact, but they have engaged in a rather unusual policy approach whereby in one committee room certain members of their party defend women's rights and oppose anything that seems to be discrimination, while in another room other members of their party propose a differential in the benefits which would affect the very same women.