

• (2:50 p.m.)

As the hon. member who just spoke said, some aspects of the plan are like the universal medicare scheme. I suggest to the minister that we would congratulate him and support him wholeheartedly if he were to bring in an unemployment insurance plan similar to the medicare plan to cover all Canadians. I am sure we are pleased to see the unemployment insurance program return to the original concept of insurance protection. While it is expected that fishermen will be excluded in time, we are also pleased to hear that for the present they will still be covered under this legislation. We will be waiting with interest to see what type of legislation will be brought in to cover the fishermen.

Without question, we in this party support the concept of universal coverage. I am pleased to note in the statement today that universal coverage is one of the main points the minister makes. We welcome without hesitation the fact that people who become ill when employed and women who are pregnant, sometimes, under difficult financial circumstances, will be looked after. We welcome the fact that those people who are now excluded will be included in this comprehensive plan. There is one aspect of this scheme about which many of us wonder and which will be discussed at length during the committee hearings. We question the reason why some of the self-employed people are being left out. We welcome the fact that full-time housekeepers will be included. We agree with the idea of universal coverage and suggest that this white paper should be studied by the committee on manpower and labour so that consideration may be given to those points about which we have some questions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement on the white paper includes several points which are worth emphasizing. However, as I have just seen that document and since it is referred to the committee for consideration, we will undoubtedly have the opportunity to study it thoroughly and state our views.

What has especially held my attention is the reference to universal coverage. I immediately thought of the Canadian workers, 7,000 or 8,000 of whom find work in the United States each year. For 20 years, representations have been made to the Canadian government to enable those workers to draw unemployment insurance benefits. So, if I understand the meaning of universal coverage, I presume

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that the provisions concerning the application of the regulations will be flexible enough for those citizens who cope, to a certain extent, with the present problem of unemployment in Canada by finding themselves a job in the United States to take advantage of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

There remains another point to be considered and which I have also noticed. It is the following statement:

In harmony with our intention to return to the insurance principle, certain welfare features that have crept into the plan will be discontinued.

I wonder whether the Unemployment Insurance Commission should not get a new name and simply be called an insurance company, because I doubt very much that this legislation will retain any social characteristics. The first concern is to look after the fund, as insurance companies usually do. That is fine, because it is their responsibility, but social legislation must take into greater account the needs of the unemployed and not the protection of the fund. I have seen this happen thousands of times while I was involved with the labour movement and also since I have been a member of the House of Commons.

I thank the minister for having made that statement, for having tabled the white paper, which we intend to consider. However, I wish the new act will be flexible so that the unemployed, who in most cases have not had the benefit of a higher education, can understand those provisions.

[English]

REFERENCE OF WHITE PAPER TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON LABOUR, MANPOWER AND IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, in his comments the Minister of Labour suggested, and the suggestion seemed to find support, that the white paper he tabled should be referred to the committee. I wonder whether the House might be agreeable to giving unanimous consent to the following motion:

That the white paper on unemployment insurance tabled this day be referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. members have heard the motion proposed by the President of the Privy Council. Is the motion agreed to?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

Motion agreed to.