

*Supply*

make one brief comment. At this time we have to be very careful of what we say. There has been a tendency for people to exaggerate, to take partisan stands and blow them into deep and abiding divisions.

Canada has always been a country where there have been regional differences, and in my own part of the world there has been a history of grievances. But I have deeply regretted the way in which those historical facts have tended to be massaged or blown into something which really is not there. It is an attempt to suggest that somehow the federal government is working against the interest of one region. That is a very dangerous game to play because it can, over a period of time, become a conventional wisdom and people tend to believe they are no longer served by the national government because they are told so often.

If there is any way in which we can ensure the continuation of this country, it is to ensure that people have a right to choose where they want to work and where they want to live. We have to make sure there is a proper balance between the peculiar and distinctive services a provincial government can provide and the broad-base national services that a federal government must supply. The history of this country has been a continuing debate on how we provide for that balance between the two levels of government.

To comment on the hon. member's statement, the best we can do as a House is to deplore that kind of comment, and be a little more diligent in trying to tell the truth, be a little more careful in how we seize upon partisan differences to try to exploit them and, at the same time, putting in motion these self-fulfilling prophecies.

I think a lot of the anger in western Canada could be diluted very quickly if there was a greater attempt to provide proper and accurate information on what is going on. One thing that frightens me is exactly that kind of statement. As I read them, in some cases put forward by some of our colleagues, or by members of some of the provincial houses, and certainly by some of those who lead what they call so-called separatist movements, I find they are engaging in serious distortion. No one will benefit from this if it continues. I appreciate the member drawing that to my attention, but I think it is something of which all members of this House should be sensitive. We have a great responsibility in this House to be very careful and very responsible in what we say, and not to engage in that kind of extremism.

**Mr. Kristiansen:** I thank the minister for that response. I think it is a reasonably accurate one.

As a rule, would the minister generally agree that social insurance programs in the main should provide the greatest benefits to those who, in his own words, "need help the most", and that the taxes and revenues raised to pay for these programs should generally be levied according to ability to pay? I think a simple yes or no would suffice.

**Mr. Axworthy:** In general, Mr. Chairman, I agree with that remark.

**Mr. Kristiansen:** I would gather, then, that the minister would agree that a program, a program which pays the greater benefits to those who have most income but who pay less, that such a program would be unfair. Would that be a correct assessment of the minister's judgment?

**Mr. Axworthy:** It would be more fair to me if the hon. member told me which programs he is referring to so I could be better able to respond to the specific program, and not deal with generalities.

**Mr. Kristiansen:** I will state it another way. I would gather the minister would also agree that a program where those recipients with lowest incomes pay the most for less benefits, that a program of that nature would be unjust. Would that be correct? I have put it in another way so that it can be as clear as possible, and I think we should establish the principles first.

● (1910)

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Chairman, again working on the basis of existentialism I would prefer to have the circumstance and the case cited for me so that I would be able to respond more accurately to the hon. member rather than just proceeding on broad principles. I think we agree on the principles. We should now get down to case studies.

**Mr. Kristiansen:** Mr. Chairman, assuming by that reply that we do agree on the principles, I should like briefly to point out that under our unemployment insurance system, which is the social insurance plan to which I was referring in my comments—I am sure the minister suspected as much because the description was certainly accurate—for a person earning \$6,000 a year, unemployment insurance will cost \$18 more per year in 1981, but he is entitled to collect \$8 per week less than he would have been entitled to collect in 1978. If he is unemployed for an average period, that is, 15 weeks average duration of unemployment, he will be paying \$18 more for \$120 less in benefits.

Second, the \$12,000 earner, who is close to the average, in 1981 pays the same net amount for unemployment insurance protection as the \$50,000 earner, yet he is entitled to collect \$51 per week less.

I would just like to clarify the matter. The minister and his officials might be quizzing themselves as to my meaning, but I believe it was last June in discussion of Bill C-3 that I raised some of these topics. I recently brought some of the cost calculations up to date, including the actual cost, after taxes, of the premiums which people at various income levels pay for, relatively speaking, greater or lesser benefits. We find that in 1981 those with \$8,000 earned income, for example, will make required unemployment insurance contributions of \$144. Their net insurance contribution, therefore, will also be \$144 because there will be no tax saving to them on the basis of deductions due to their income level. This is for a weekly entitlement of \$92.

For a person with an earned income of \$10,000 the required unemployment insurance contribution is \$180. The \$44 tax