

### *Unemployment Insurance*

delayed making their claims they are subject to the ridiculous proposal of having to get a second job and being laid off again. That is a very discriminatory proposal.

The Unemployment Insurance Act has always provided that while you work you pay contributions, and when you are laid off or pre-retired you get benefits. There was never any question of subjecting people to the requirement of a second job before they received benefits. This is a *post-facto* sort of fandangled method to get the Government out of the hole. It does not really get the Government out of the hole at all and it is unfair and discriminatory. To draw such a cut-off line between one group of pre-retirement pensioners and another is completely unacceptable.

The Government did not come to this position easily. When the Government first announced the policy, it said that it would reimburse those who applied before January 5, 1986, but only if they proved that they were misled by an official of the Department. There was a lot of protest against that and the Government backed down and finally came forward with the Bill we have today.

It is really amusing that the Government is now trying to blame the Opposition for this entire mess. Does the Government really think the public is that stupid? The Government implemented these cuts unfairly and harshly and maintained them for over a year. Finally, under pressure from the public and many groups, it backed down one-quarter of the way and then half way. That is where we stand now. Now the Government is blaming us for the fact that these people do not have their money. These people do not have their money because these cuts, which should never have been made, were made by the Government.

Bill C-50 provides for the full reimbursement of those who applied for UI before January 5. We support that, but I warn pensioners to watch out because the Government may still have some tricks up its sleeve to cut them out. However, we do approve of that provision. The Bill also contains the provision for no reimbursement of those who applied after January 5 unless they get a second job and are laid off again. We think that is discriminatory, unfair and unacceptable. We cannot support that.

Finally, there are provisions in the Bill which deal with severance pay. The Government also decided to cut back on unemployment insurance for those who got severance pay although that severance pay was necessary to relocate or set up in a new job or business. The Government of Ontario did not agree with that and passed provincial legislation to overcome the federal proposal. Through Bill C-50 the federal Government is implementing measures to render null and void that which the Ontario Government tried to do to protect certain pensioners.

We asked the Government several months ago to split this Bill into two Bills, one which would include the provision for reimbursing those who applied before January 5, 1986, which we would support and pass in five minutes. We wanted the new

fandangled ridiculous system to be put in a separate Bill. It should have been put in a separate Bill because it is something entirely new in the unemployment insurance system.

The Government refused to split the Bill. It would rather hold one group of pensioners hostage in order to implement something with which no one agrees. The Government has put a good measure in the Bill along with an awful measure and expects that we will vote for the awful measure in order to have the good measure implemented. That did not work. The Government would not split the Bill. We asked the Government to take administrative action to reimburse those pensioners who applied before January 5 and who were going to be reimbursed anyway. Since the Government cut them by administrative action, we asked it to reimburse them in the same fashion. However, the Government turned that down as well.

● (1140)

Today we are faced with a Bill in which one part is beneficial to pensioners who were originally cut but will now be reimbursed, but in which there are two other completely unacceptable parts.

Consequently, I want to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and by substituting therefor:

"this House declines to proceed with a measure, the principle of which is to provide discriminatory and inequitable treatment for pre-retired pensioners with regard to their right to unemployment insurance".

Let me tell the Minister that if he were to accept this amendment and redraft the Bill so that all pre-retired pensioners would be treated the same way, we would pass the Bill in 15 minutes without any debate. We would do it before ten o'clock today and pass the entire Bill. However, we cannot accept a Bill which discriminates against a group of pre-retired pensioners in this way.

The Government eventually saw the folly in the cuts it had made last year and has moved in a piecemeal fashion to withdraw that injustice. However, it has only gone halfway. Why does the Government not recognize that these cuts were entirely wrong, as suggested by the Forget Commission, the advisory council on older workers, and as recommended by the people who attended the Prime Minister's economic summit? I suggest that the Government could accept this amendment and easily redraft the Bill.

I have further amendments to put forward in Committee of the Whole if the Minister does not accept this amendment, but this could be done very quickly and the Bill redrafted so that it would be non-discriminatory toward all pre-retired pensioners. We could then pass the Bill.

If the Government decides to reintroduce these measures next year so that they become effective at a future date, we would still oppose such legislation, but at least everyone would know the rules of the game and that the measure would be put into effect.