

Supply—Labour

Prime Minister, the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, P.C., Q.C., M.P., at a Meeting of the New Brunswick Progressive Conservative Association, Fredericton, N.B., October 21, 1961." What did the Prime Minister say in these notes that were given to the press? This was not something that was casually said off the cuff. These notes were given out for the guidance of the press in writing stories for the people of Canada. Here is what it says, and it staggers the imagination:

Then there was unemployment insurance. We contended that the St. Laurent administration had failed to have unemployment insurance do the job it was intended to do. At that time, Canadians in only six of the ten provinces came under its provisions.

Here is the Prime Minister of Canada so ignorant of the law, so ignorant of the administration that he had been carrying on for over four years at that time—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Would you repeat that?

Mr. Pickersgill: I certainly will repeat it. I thought it might be a misprint because it staggers the imagination.

Then there was unemployment insurance. We contended that the St. Laurent administration had failed to have unemployment insurance do the job it was intended to do. At that time, Canadians in only six of the ten provinces came under its provisions.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Amazing.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is the kind of thing the Prime Minister goes about the country saying at political meetings. Of course, that statement is false, as every member in this house knows. It is completely and utterly false. I am not accusing the Prime Minister of having made it up. It was obviously made up in the boiler factory where the Prime Minister gets his speeches. All he does, apparently, is to use this stuff. He does not bother checking it. He does not bother to find out whether what he says is fact or, to use one of his favourite words, fiction.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: It is absolutely appalling—

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): May I ask a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): Was the reference to unemployment insurance or to hospital insurance?

An hon. Member: He is referring to unemployment assistance.

Mr. Pickersgill: He is referring to unemployment insurance. I shall read on a bit

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

if the hon. gentleman says it was unemployment assistance. If it was unemployment assistance, the Prime Minister is even more wrong. I quote:

Today, its benefits are enjoyed by Canadians in all ten provinces.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: I know hon. gentlemen do not like this revelation of what the Prime Minister is doing. They are trying to create a diversion. I quote:

Today, its benefits are enjoyed by Canadians in all ten provinces.

The Prime Minister was elected to this house for the first time on March 26, 1940. He was here when the amendment was made to the British North America Act to place unemployment insurance under parliament. He was here when the act was put on the statute books. He knows quite well that from the day that act came into operation it applied to the whole of Canada and yet he goes down to Fredericton and has the gall to say that, at that time, when his government came into office, Canadians in only six of the ten provinces came under its provisions.

Mr. Browne (St. John's West): What is the text from which the hon. member is reading?

Mr. Pickersgill: I am reading from a release from the Prime Minister's office, the title of which I gave fully if the hon. gentleman had taken the trouble to listen. These are notes for a speech by the Prime Minister at Fredericton, and I am not going to repeat the full title.

Mr. Pallett: There is no suggestion the speech was delivered in that form?

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not know whether or not it was. I do know this document was issued to the press by the Prime Minister's office. I know that this was one of the things the Prime Minister felt it was quite proper to use. He would not have put it in the notes and given them to the press if he did not.

When you go on and read the next paragraph, it is quite clear that he was referring to unemployment insurance.

We said that its coverage should be extended. As a result of action we have taken, its benefits are now available for 52 instead of 36 weeks.

It is obviously unemployment insurance about which the right hon. gentleman was talking. This just illustrates that careless attitude with regard to public business that has characterized virtually everything this government has done. It is the same sort of thing that makes them say:

For the first time, fishermen and other seasonal workers are included under its coverage.