

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

working for a living, about the virtue of hard work, and I doubt we will. They have made their record and they have made their bed on giveaways. Now they must lie on it.

We are a legislative body gathered together to consider the bill. In considering it, we should start with the needs of our constituents. Our constituents, as a house, as opposed to individuals, are clearly working Canadians, the working people of this country. They are the traditional office worker with one wife, two mortgages, and three children. They are farm labourers, oil field roughnecks, working mothers, single parents, newly graduated stenographers, bank clerks and laboratory technicians. The range in geography and profession is enormous. It stretches from high technology workers in the highrise towers of urban Canada to the fishermen of eastern Canada. To quote a former colleague of some members of the House in the legislature of Newfoundland, "from those high technology workers to the last forgotten fishermen in the rill of Cape St. George in Newfoundland."

Most of the people in the country are working Canadians who come under the provisions of the bill. The question is: what do they want from us when we consider this bill? I think they want four things. The first one is leadership. The second one is some clear thinking and common sense. The third one is that they want some economy measures. They want an end to the outrageous drunken sailor spending which has been ongoing in Canada for most of the last ten years. The fourth one is that they want the country put back to work. Of those four points, two are not appropriate to this debate.

Leadership, by definition, is a mandate of the government. It is not appropriate to a debate on this bill. Hopefully that is something which will be decided by the people of Canada in the spring of next year. The electorate will make its decision as to whether that mandate has been exercised responsibly. The fourth point concerning job creation has nothing to do with this bill. That is not appropriate to this debate. But the middle two points, clear thinking and common sense, as well as economy measures, are appropriate for debate at this time.

When Canadians talk about clear thinking they do not mean merely that the government will take one plus two and arrive at three. They do not mean merely that the government will protect everyone in need, and that it will say, "No one in Canada should ever lose their job for any circumstances, or ever lose any wages or salary because they lost their job." Neither do they mean that no one should ever be protected in any way. They mean that those who are in need should be protected. We should protect those whose needs are the greatest. We should not design disincentives to work, or incentives to cheat in the plan. In effect, they mean exactly what the Auditor General said in his report this year, that Canadians deserve and should receive value for their money. When Canadians demand economy measures, they mean we should cut back outrageous over-spending, and eliminate waste, but they do not mean we should stop spending money entirely.

Given those definitions, as we approach this bill, we should attempt to save as much as we humanely can, and protect

[Mr. Parker.]

working Canadians as much as we economically can. That brings me to the specific proposals in the bill before the House, because it does both poorly. It does not save as much as it should or could, and it does not protect as much as it should or could.

● (2102)

Our party has proposed a two-tier plan which would, on the one hand, protect those who need it most and, on the other hand, would economize most with those who can most easily bear the effects of those economies. All our amendments taken together would save more money than the government's proposals. They would have less adverse effects on the broad range of working Canadians, less adverse effects on the provinces, and less adverse effects on city governments.

The amendments that we have proposed have been supported most. They have been supported by the provinces, they have been supported by independent groups outside government in Canada, and they have been supported by the party sector. They are supported by actuarial studies, and they are supported by actuarial experience in other countries. Germany, to name only one country, has a two-tier system. Canada, in fact, had a two-tier system for some 30 years which, ironically, came to an end with the introduction in 1971 of precisely the amendments that marked the beginning of outrageous over-spending into which this measure has led the country since that time.

We are proposing a two-tier system. There is nothing unusual about that. We have suggested specific figures, but unlike the government we are not insisting that our proposals be accepted and that nothing else should be considered. We think it is important for this government to save money. We pointed it out long before they admitted the necessity of it. We think it is important at the same time to provide reasonable protection to Canadians who need it, and unemployment insurance is vitally important to Canadians, not only in the rich provinces like Ontario, not only in ridings like my own in urban Toronto, but in ridings in poor areas of eastern Canada or Quebec, in disadvantaged areas in the west, and the west is not entirely a fabric of wealth, swimming pools and cadillacs, there are poor areas there and the people who live there need protection.

We propose a two-tier plan. We proposed it in committee and we propose it here now. But the government consistently refuses to consider it. The only defence which they seem to be able to offer is that the minister would lose face. We know of amendments that had been suggested which do not seem to get acceptance at the cabinet level or within the Liberal party. My leader spoke today of the difficulties they are having in controlling their own members. I do not know whether the reason so few of them are speaking in the debate today indicates that they have to get their speeches cleared and that not many have managed it, but that is a likely supposition. Surely members on that side are interested in this bill, surely they are as interested as we are in protecting Canadians on the one hand and in saving money for the government on the other, but why are they not speaking?