

*Adjournment Debate*

In closing, I would like to quote for the record from a report of the *Office de la construction du Québec*, which clearly states that the worker who reaches the age of 65 is no longer protected by the Unemployment Insurance Act. For a retired worker to be affected by the recent changes to the unemployment insurance regulations, he must be under 65 and his annuity must exceed \$321.75 a month. In such a case, he will no longer be entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. Can someone live with \$321.75 a month nowadays, Mr. Speaker? It is ridiculous. In fact, the Office says:

We can establish at about 6,800 the number of pensioners whose monthly income exceeds \$300 a month and who are under 65.

Half of them are under 60, Mr. Speaker.

However, in the same report, Table 1 shows that, in 1984, 5,432 pensioners registered hours of work during the year, and we can presume that a very high proportion of them are under 65. This is why we say that, realistically, at least 5,000 construction workers in Quebec are penalized by these unfair and unsensitive regulations—

● (1820)

[*English*]

Or, as we say in English, unfair.

**Mr. Chuck Cook (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, the unemployment insurance program has operated on certain basic principles. Most important are these two: universal payment of premiums to pool the risk; payment of benefits to those who are both unemployed and not receiving income as a result. The changes the Government has made are consistent with those principles.

There are those who seem to believe that unemployment insurance should operate like a savings plan or prepaid pension scheme. The fact is that unemployment insurance is not, and was never intended to be, any of those things. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) announced on November 8, 1984, as part of the Expenditure Reduction Program, that the UI rules dealing with pension income arising out of an employment would be changed as of December 31, 1984. On December 20, 1984, Cabinet decided to postpone to January, 1986, implementation of that change. This was in order to allow the private sector sufficient time to adjust to the changes. The pension regulations have now been in force since January 5, 1986. Any claimants in receipt of UI benefits on and after that date became subject to the new rules. The starting date of a claim has no impact. Claimants are allowed to earn up to 25 per cent of their benefit rate before deductions are made from benefits payable. The program is being administered according to its basic principles. If the Forget Commission suggests that fundamental principles should be revised, then this Government will consider making the appropriate changes.

I would repeat that for all to hear very clearly: If the Forget Commission suggests that fundamental principles should be revised, then this Government will consider making the appropriate changes.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 6.25 p.m.