

Adjournment Debate

certainly be a long way ahead. Americans will then see us not as a country of mountains and Mounties, but as a country which is friendly and fun, courteous and classy. Our theme can be "Canada, a great place to go; Canadians, great to be with".

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Landry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for her interest in tourism in Canada. With her, I realize, and this Government realizes, the extent of the industry's contribution to this country. I think that considering her very perceptive speech, the Hon. Member would make an excellent spokesperson at the Epcot Center, if the Canadian Government ever decided to send her there as our representative.

We realize and we have been made aware of this by the many letters sent to a number of government Members that the Epcot Center does not give a true picture of Canada. As my hon. friend explained, and the point was well taken, the 14 million or so Americans who visit the Center every year would certainly have a better idea of our country and a greater interest in going there if we showed them the tremendous opportunities this country holds in store.

In this connection, the Government had prepared a study of the American market for holiday travel, and one of the points the study raised was that Americans really do not know our country. We therefore have every reason to make the splendours of our country known through this Center.

I was able to give the Hon. Member the assurance that the Canadian Government, and more specifically the Department of Tourism, has met with the authorities of the Epcot Center, and they are trying to make the Center realize it must change the way our country is advertised.

I think the Hon. Member will be pleased with the action we are taking at this time, and I am sure, as she is, that in the near future Americans will visit our country in greater numbers, including of course Expo 86, as she mentioned in her speech.

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE—FORGET COMMISSION—
REQUEST FOR INTERIM REPORT ON PENSION INCOME

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, on April 7, 1986, I again raised with the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) in the House of Commons the question of the changes made to the unemployment insurance program affecting pensioners across Canada. The Minister indicated that in June of 1986, she would be receiving from the Commission of Inquiry into Unemployment, the Forget Commission, an interim report, which she believed would deal with the matter of pension income in relation to unemployment insurance.

It is very timely at this moment in the House of Commons that we again address this controversial subject, which has brought grief to many unemployed pensioners across the

country, particularly pensioners of the Canadian Armed Forces who have been forced to seek other employment after retiring from the Forces in order to maintain themselves and their families.

Let me begin at the beginning by mentioning that on November 21, 1984, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) indicated in his financial statement, delivered in the House of Commons, that he intended to make some changes to the unemployment insurance program.

There was very little detail included in his speech to the House of Commons, but one of the papers that was introduced at the time of his speech indicated that some administrative changes to the UI program would be made immediately in order to improve the quality of the program, and reduce program costs. The changes involve the inclusion of pension income, separation allowances and vacation pay and establishing benefit levels. That was a simple enough statement on the part of the Minister of Finance, but Members of Parliament generally on all sides of the House really did not know the impact of this particular measure on pensioners, particularly those in the Canadian Forces. Let me explain why.

● (1810)

The concern of persons who were retiring in 1985 was related to the fact that they anticipated an eligibility for unemployment insurance. That was part of their motivation in retiring in 1985 and part of their financial plan in relation to their retirement. There was an immediate result of an unfairness to those persons who were contemplating retirement, not knowing that this change in the eligibility was to be made. The Government made quite a wise decision at the time to delay for one year implementation of any changes in eligibility in relation to employment income. That stalled the whole matter.

Unfortunately, it meant that there was very little publicity about the exact ramifications of this change. As January 1, 1986 approached, many of us did not know the exact details in terms of the effect of this change on individuals who were receiving retirement income. I say that because if one scours the official report of the House of Commons, *Hansard*, and if one searches the media reports, one will find very few utterances by members of the New Democratic and Liberal Parties objecting in specific terms to this change in the unemployment insurance eligibility.

It came as a shock to some people to realize that when the change was actually implemented in January, 1986, after a year's warning, that the results as they applied to particular individuals were very harmful and quite unfair.

It was in the context of that difficult situation that the Minister of Employment and Immigration indicated her intention to refer the whole matter to the Forget Commission for total examination and a report back to her. I suggest that was a wise and understandable decision under the circumstances.