

Unemployment Insurance Act

ployment service, 200,042 reside in the province of Quebec. This is hardly an enviable record. The article states:

The Department of Labour has just issued its monthly figures on employment and unemployment. The figures for May show that we are gradually emerging from the recession, but that progress is slower than might be expected in many quarters. On the basis of unemployment figures since the beginning of the year, it can be said that they are about a month ahead of last year's but still way behind those of the full employment period of 1957.

And a little farther down, the article says:

It is therefore obvious that even if the three per cent target is reached during the summer it will be threatened during the forthcoming fall and winter unless there is some unforeseen acceleration in economic activity. At the present rate of Canadian recovery, we can hardly hope to be back to normal until 1968 . . . even then, provided we are not adversely affected by some outside influence.

Speaking in this house, the hon. member for St. Hyacinthe-Bagot, who obviously speaks for the province of Quebec in matters of labour, made the following introductory statement:

Mr. Chairman, I have two reasons to take part in this debate. First, I should like to make some general remarks with regard to this legislation and, second, I should like to set the record straight about the statements made by the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Caron).

Mr. Chairman, I think that under the circumstances, the hon. member for St. Hyacinthe-Bagot should certainly have indicated a third reason considering that he was speaking for the Quebec department of labour in the discussion on this bill, surely he should have mentioned the number of unemployed in our province. In my view, that would have been the most substantial part of his speech.

And the hon. member went on to say:

Mr. Chairman, the negative attitude of the Liberal opposition is inadmissible, since it is directly contrary to labour interests. All the noise made by our friends has but one purpose: to distract public attention so that people might forget about our friend's indifference to labour.

Mr. Chairman, in my view, the Liberal opposition does not need to distract public attention. The people of the province of Quebec have enough sense to read the papers and to realize that out of the 585,489 persons registered with the national employment service, the province of Quebec has 200,042. I believe that the labouring people of the province of Quebec are more interested than anyone in all social legislation which may be introduced in this house to assist them; in my opinion, full employment would be the best assistance they could get, because it is a situation that we have not had in the province of Quebec since 1957. Apparently, this government would like to put the blame for unem-

[Mr. Racine.]

ployment on public organizations or upon people who have nothing to do with it. As I see it, that attitude has had a particular effect on the situation of the unemployment insurance fund.

Since the session started, we have noticed that in facing unemployment, the government has always found some way to put the blame for it upon people who had nothing at all to do with the problem.

Last year, the government and the Minister of Labour extended the period of seasonal benefits. That was surely no way to provide jobs for our workers, or to reduce unemployment.

However, there again the government called upon municipalities to assume a responsibility which rested upon the government itself. And when the winter works program went into effect, municipalities lost considerable sums of money in assuming this responsibility which properly belonged to the federal government. While government members claim that this legislation was most popular with labour, I say, like others have done, especially among members of the Liberal opposition, that this measure has been most unpopular, and that the depletion of the U.I.C. fund is a result of the high level of unemployment.

Again, workers and employers are being blamed for this new problem. That is why, like others who are concerned in the welfare of workers, I will vote against the adoption of this bill.

(Text):

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, just before calling it one o'clock may I suggest to the Minister of Labour that he take the Minister of Finance out for lunch today and ensure that he has a very sweet dessert so the latter hon. gentleman may not return after lunch, and we will get along with this business much faster.

Mr. Spencer: What an outstanding contribution to parliamentary debate.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, I see that the Minister of Labour was unsuccessful in keeping the Minister of Finance out this afternoon.