

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay)—Administration of Justice—Dealing with grievances of RCMP officers; the hon. member for Burlington (Mr. Kempling)—Air Canada—Service out of Hamilton—Effect on Nordair; the hon. member for Mission-Port Moody (Mr. Rose)—Fisheries—Closing of Fraser River, B.C. fishery—Request for tabling terms of reference.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT, 1971

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Axworthy that Bill C-3, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Lincoln): Mr. Speaker, my first words are to congratulate the present Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) for the very excellent work he has done since he assumed office and this session commenced. I want to express my satisfaction too on the choice by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) for this particular portfolio. This ministry requires particular dedication on the part of the individual. I say that not necessarily or exclusively because I was a former minister of manpower—and there are many in the House—but because I know the pressures on the minister of manpower, and I know they will grow over the next six months or year or two as we move into a recession, hopefully short but obviously very painful.

This portfolio requires a minister whose basic philosophy is such that he can stand up to the pressures, not only from outside the government but from within. I am sure from my many, many years of friendship with the minister, which goes back over long decades, that he has those qualities and qualifications. I am sure he will take any of the remarks I make today in that light. I might be able to warn him of some of the pitfalls that are ahead of him.

Last evening I was sipping a glass of good Canadian wine from the region of Lincoln in honour of the birthday of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and, incidentally, the celebration of my eighteenth year in this House. It is not quite 18 years. Let me put it another way; it was 18 years ago yesterday that I was first elected to the House. That is, of course, true of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray), but we are among a diminishing group in this House. I am not suggesting we are getting older, but perhaps the standards have changed in the House and we are not going after quality as much as we did in 1962.

Unemployment Insurance Act

What I thought I would do last night was review, if I could, the impact of the unemployment insurance plan at the end of the decade. In a way, that was inspired by some of the remarks of the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) who mentioned philosophy. Legislation, concepts and principles must be based on a clear philosophy. When I looked at the filing cabinets of documents gathered before the 1971 amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act and gathered since, supplemented by writings, documents and debates in forums on economic views as to the impact of the plan, I decided to be philosophical for half an hour when talking about unemployment insurance.

The hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) reflected in a way the philosophy behind the original act brought into this House in 1941 or 1942. Members know that in the hungry thirties, to which the hon. gentleman alluded and so graphically described as the ten lost years, there was no such thing as unemployment insurance. That was a shame because of the degradation to the worker and the farmer, those people out of work for no reason of their own. Many farmers were victims of climatic conditions. It is amazing how people survived during that period of time, but some did not and riots broke out.

In 1942 the provinces ceased to concern themselves about their provincial jurisdiction or their rights and gladly ceded jurisdiction in this area to the federal government. The legislation reflected the philosophy of the 1930s, and it prodded very gently into the field of social policy and social reform. There was still that old biblical concept, despite the 1930s, that there was something wrong about going on unemployment insurance, even if you were unemployed through no reason of your own. I was not too sure, as I reviewed some of the documents, editorials and writings last night, that we have shed the principle that somehow it is immoral, illegal or wrong to accept unemployment insurance or even welfare.

The legislation in 1942 was based on philosophy reflecting the 1930s. The legislation of 1971 attempted to reflect the problems of the future, the problems of the seventies. Legislators did not dare predict the problems or the challenges of the 1980s. I welcome the minister's determination to come in with perhaps a new white paper, based hopefully on the same philosophy but not necessarily so.

• (1640)

I hope that the task force which the minister will set up has the courage to stand up to vested interests which still believe that there is some merit in a free enterprise system in having a large pool of unemployed in order to keep wages down. I hope that the task force will portray the right degree of cynicism when that particular lobby approaches it, as it did members of this House in 1971.

Before I get down to some fundamentals, the legislation of 1971, for which I received some credit, in this House, was not my legislation; I would like to say that it was. It was a piece of legislation which reflected the collective views of the members of all parties. It was a piece of legislation which was adopted unanimously in this House and which reflected very intense