

Once it was done we asked the Government to correct it in other ways. However, we want to put on record again that we believe this whole shameful mess was illegal in the first place.

Once it was announced more than a year ago we in Parliament strongly objected and asked that these measures be withdrawn. Nothing was forthcoming. The former Minister consistently refused to make any change or budge one inch. She would not agree that there was anything wrong with these cuts which, as I say, were introduced in the middle of the game when the rules had already been established.

Not only did we object but many associations of retired Canadians objected as well, associations of retired military personnel, retired RCMP personnel, and others from the public and private sectors. They all strongly objected. They held demonstrations on Parliament Hill. I believe we had at least three demonstrations. There were mass meetings in Montreal, Victoria, Halifax and other parts of the country. Not only did those associations and opposition Members of Parliament object, but very significantly, at the Government's economic summit conference in March of 1985, the only petition which carried—and by the way, everyone there had been invited by the Government—was ignored by the Government. Eighty of the 136 participants at the conference signed the petition which asked the Government to withdraw the measures. The Government called these people together in a conference to discuss certain economic and social questions, and the only thing the conference decided upon was ignored by the Government.

Later on we had the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council with respect to older workers. The former Minister appointed that committee to advise her on programs and policies with respect to older workers. In August of 1985 the committee presented its report entitled *Older Workers, an Imminent Crisis in the Labour Market*. What did it say? It said the Government should not proceed with the announced changes in the unemployment insurance regulations scheduled to take place in January of 1986 regarding the identification of pensioners' income for the period immediately following lay-off until the commission of inquiry on unemployment insurance has reviewed the issue and made recommendations.

• (1130)

The recommendation of the committee with regard to older workers was also ignored by the Government. In the interim we asked questions of the former Minister of Employment and Immigration and, after her, of the new Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard). We gave new examples of the hardship this was causing. A retired pensioner in the West committed suicide because he could no longer make ends meet. He was so struck by the harshness of this measure that he took his life. That very sad case was put on the record by one of my colleagues.

We continued to ask that this measure be rescinded, but we were refused. The answer given by the Minister on all occasions was that no changes could be made because they were

awaiting the recommendations of the Forget Commission. That answer was repeated over and over again.

Finally, on December 3, 1986, the Forget Commission reported and in a unanimous recommendation said that the current treatment of pension income should be rescinded with the effective date of January 5, 1986. The report went on to say that if such a policy was implemented it should be implemented on January 1, 1989. In other words, a lot of lead time should be given and it should not affect in any way those who had entered into early retirement schemes without knowing that this would happen.

In addition to the petitions, the meetings, the lobbying carried on by many associations, and the many questions put in this House, three groups set up by the Government to advise it with respect to older workers made recommendations against these cuts and asked that they be rescinded. Yet the Government refused on all occasions.

The issue did not die. These people did not give up. They continued to badger, push, pull and embarrass the Government until finally, under the new Minister, the Government agreed early this year to make some kind of reimbursement, but still on a discriminatory basis. The Government finally decided that it would reimburse those who had made their application for unemployment insurance before January 5, 1986. For those who applied after that date there is a nonsense formula.

The Government is saying that the cuts for them will be maintained because they applied after January 5, 1986, but if they get a second job and are laid off from it their pre-retirement pension will no longer be counted against them and their contributions on the previous job will count. They will get unemployment insurance at the full rate after being laid off from the second job.

That is a harsh and unacceptable provision. Many of these people are in their late fifties or early sixties and have no chance of getting a second job. If they live in the greater Toronto area or an area of economic growth they might be able to find a job, but a large number of these people live in Atlantic Canada or other slow growth economic regions. They are like myself and many other Members in this House in that they are in their fifties and early sixties and are still capable of working. However, we know that it is very difficult for people to get jobs at that stage of life. Because these people applied after January 5, 1986, they are subject to this cruel and harsh treatment.

In the last few days when the public knew that this Bill was coming forward today I received many calls from individuals who had been pre-retired before January 5, 1986. When they went to the Unemployment Insurance Commission to make their claims they were discouraged from doing so. The officials said there was no use in making a claim because they would not get anything anyway. They delayed making their claims until after January 5, although they could have done so before, because they did not have any expectation of what the Government might do. Later they found out that because they