

*Unemployment Assistance*

now where you determine whether or not the dominion government can assist financially to provide for that need now being met by municipalities and provinces. But none of that information was forthcoming. So we are left in a state of indefiniteness with regard to this measure. I hope the minister will not think it amiss that I have offered some criticism of his method of introducing legislation. It may serve as a guide to him for anything he wants to bring forward in the future. The committee stage is being looked forward to with great eagerness. We expect there to have a comprehensive statement from the minister with regard to this measure.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** If the minister speaks now he will conclude the debate.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, in closing this debate I simply want to say this to my hon. friend so that he will not be under any misapprehension. There is no limit on the time that he or anyone else can take on this measure. I am sure the minister will be able to handle himself just as he has, moderately well, in the past been able to deal with questions submitted by my very enlightened and honourable friend who has just spoken. I would not want to pit my talents against his but I want to assure him that he need have no particular concern in that regard.

**Mr. Churchill:** You are clearer on this matter than you were on civil defence, are you?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes. I well remember that occasion. I think my hon. friend and I will agree that on that occasion, helpful and constructive as he was, he was not overly knowledgeable in all aspects of that question himself.

With regard to the question raised at the outset by my hon. friend, namely the question of anticipated costs, may I say this to him. If he will look at the agreement which was tabled on the first day of this session and which is the same as the bill in principle, he will see that it is not possible to anticipate the cost unless one knew first of all the number of people involved and, second, the rates of assistance which the municipalities or the provinces, separately or conjointly, were prepared to provide for the beneficiaries. Under this measure the federal government is committing itself for not more than 50 per cent.

My hon. friend has seemingly criticized, as have some other hon. gentlemen—and this is an understandable criticism—the fact that there is going to be a hard core problem which will be looked after by the municipalities and the provinces themselves before the

federal government begins to assist. I thought the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough) had satisfactorily disposed of that matter herself, but I suppose hon. gentlemen have not had an opportunity of reading what she said.

What are the facts? This particular measure will authorize the federal government to pay out of the consolidated fund moneys in a sharing program with the provinces in order to assist two groups of people, namely unemployed employables, and those unemployed individuals who cannot work. What this bill does is to remove completely, in so far as the six provinces are concerned, the traditional distinction between those who are capable of working and are out of work and those who are out of work and cannot work for physical reasons or otherwise. That is the main feature of this bill and it is one that has won commendation from the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) who spoke last night and who has obviously given this matter a great deal of thought, as has the hon. member for Hamilton West.

I may say this with regard to what was said by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch), who spoke with special emphasis on British Columbia. British Columbia is a good example of the situation. At the present time in the province of British Columbia there are about 20,000 individuals who are out of work—that is a rough figure, according to the latest figures available—and roughly about 5,000 of those are unemployed employables. Under this measure we will be taking care of three-quarters of that group. But for this measure the federal government would not have any authority whatsoever to assist this larger group.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** Will the minister permit me to ask a question?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** Would you repeat what you just said as to the percentage that you are now to be able to assist?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes. I was using rough estimated figures on the unemployment situation to date in British Columbia. I am going to take each province just in order to show the picture. In the case of British Columbia we estimate roughly 20,000 are unemployed but 5,000 of these are unemployed employables. The others are part of the hard core problem about which my hon. friend spoke last night. They are individuals who are deemed by the welfare authorities of the province to be incapable of work. But for this measure we would not be in a position, under our declared policies or under any legislation, to give assistance to those people.