

Unemployment Insurance Act

minister was specific to the copper. We do not yet know all the revenue. We will have to wait until the T4 slips are analysed some time this summer. The payments from companies and employees are in the revenue fund; they have to be separated by the Department of National Revenue and appropriated to the departments, including unemployment insurance.

All we have heard about all day is costs. There are ways of cutting costs. I have gone through them before. It is not too late now, at twenty-five minutes to ten in the evening, to make other amendments to cut costs so we will not need \$800 million. I can review them as I did the other night. One hon. member said we should cut out self-employed fishermen on the east coast. Others have suggested that we reduce the benefits and increase the waiting period from eight weeks to twelve weeks or, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) suggested in supporting Reuben Baetz, 20 weeks.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: Go to it, increase it to 20. Members opposite can explain this to the 300,000 or 400,000 people who will be eliminated from unemployment insurance. If you do that you will at least be consistent, but you cannot have it both ways; you cannot pretend you are concerned about the unemployed by voting for this if at the same time you say you are helpless with regard to bringing in amendments to the act. You can bring in amendments right now. Cut out the fishermen, the woodworker, the women's maternity benefits—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I am sure hon. members want to be fair to the hon. member who has the floor and, at the same time, to the Chair.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the deficit for which the act provides adjustments in the employer-employee contributions, according to the figures the minister read the other day, is precisely \$159 million. Hon. members must realize that almost two million people came on the rolls, under the guise of universality, at preferred rates of 40 per cent. This year this will be up to 80 per cent and next year it will be 100 per cent. Hon. members should realize the flexibility we have to adjust the rate a nickel or a dime. That is about all that will probably happen in the next five years. It will still be less than the \$1.40 of five years ago.

It is obvious that the \$160 million will be repaid to the government. The fund, as I suggested, will remain in relative balance. If at the end of the year there is an increase, this will be reflected in lower rates. If there is a deficit, there will be higher rates. It is in the bill. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) spent all his time on the bill, but he does not understand it. Don't blame the government. It was my responsibility to inform the government if I thought we were going to run out of money. I was informed by the appropriate officials in September that we could be in trouble by December if we were not careful. I am quite sure that in September I decided the cabinet should be notified.

There is something I did not like in the minutes of the miscellaneous estimates committee. Everyone so far in the

[Mr. Mackasey.]

debate has used the evidence from the committee. This will be my only reference. There was an attempt to drag into the political arena the chief commissioner of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, who is one of the hardest working people in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: There were members who had questions. Before he was given a chance to answer, the chief commissioner was asked whether his answer would be truth or fiction. That is an insult. The chief commissioner should have told that Member of Parliament that it is an insult to a senior civil servant to presume he would lie before a committee of the House.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, I said I would not get involved in the committee hearings. However, I say to you that anything I have said in this House during the past ten years has been accurate. I would never deliberately mislead the House. I did not inform my colleagues, nor was I informed that it might be necessary or should have been necessary to obtain warrants during the emergency period when we came back to deal with the strike. I might have been irresponsible and I might have made a bad error in judgment, but the important point is that that is my responsibility, not the government's.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mackasey: What is more important is the way the opposition has used this issue to try, as someone just said, to use the reactionary forces in this country while at the same time telling the unemployed, "We are your friends because we are voting for the \$800 million." Don't vote for it. We don't need your support. We want you to be honest, consistent and men of integrity. If you do not believe in the cost of unemployment insurance, vote against it; that is all you have to do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: If members opposite think it is too costly, they should bring in the amendments I suggested. If they want to bring in amendments, we are quite prepared to lay them on the table. Why won't you bring them in?

Mr. Nielsen: There is no bill.

Mr. Mackasey: We will bring in a bill.

Mr. Stanfield: Bring it in.

Mr. Mackasey: The Leader of the Opposition said that if he had the opportunity he would reduce and remove some of the benefits in the present Unemployment Insurance Act.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Mackasey: I am asking an honest question. The opposition are saying we should bring in a bill to change the present act so that we can put people back on welfare. We can bring back the \$35 benefit which we had in 1960