

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

recall, any of you who have been out see it, there is the rock, the forest, the river, and Queen Victoria.

The rock says:

"I'll tell you what was aggravating. The Great Depression was aggravating."

Voice 1 says:

"The man in charge actually shot one of the men who came in looking for work!"

Voice 2 said:

People cannot be left to starve to death with suicide as the only alternative.

The parliamentarian said:

Conditions are such that men are getting out of control and anything is likely to happen.

Voice 3 said:

I saw about 150 labourers hanging around the door of the Salvation Army waiting for a crumb of bread while millionaires were feasting five minutes walk away.

The parliamentarian said:

What ferments of hatred are growing in the hearts and minds of Canadians of all races.

Voice 4 said:

Surely these are wonderful conditions when the police have to guard the city's dump to keep Canadians from living there!

Voice 5 said:

I feel afraid of what another winter may bring, especially if these awful dust storms continue. Rain might at least give us food.

**Mr. Oberle:** The sky is falling in.

• (2100)

**Ms. Langan:** The Hon. Members might want to listen to this. The parliamentarian said:

Strict economy on the part of this Government will mean less work and more unemployment—more hunger, more destitution, more want, more disease, more crime, more insanity, more suicides and more human deterioration.

**Mr. Oberle:** More socialism.

**Ms. Langan:** I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, those words are as true and real today as they were as this great country was being depicted by the Light Show. I think it is a very sad statement that we can laugh and say the sky

is falling in and joke about the plight of the unemployed as we snatch away benefits and withdraw from the business of a social contract. Rather than laughing, Hon. Members on the other side of the House should be apologizing to Canadians, the working men and women, the unemployed, who they are now disregarding.

**Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak in this debate on Bill C-21, the Conservative Government's mean-spirited and ill-conceived reform of our unemployment insurance system.

During the 1988 election campaign, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) said that his Government was not planning nor contemplating any changes to Canada's Unemployment Insurance Act. The Minister said one thing and his Government did another. The list of broken promises keeps getting longer and longer.

The purpose of the Bill we are debating today is to cut back our unemployment insurance system drastically. The Government's proposed reforms are designed to place the entire burden of Canada's \$12.6 billion unemployment insurance program squarely on the shoulders of this country's employees and employers.

Both labour and business groups have predicted that the inevitable result of this Bill will be higher unemployment. Nowhere will this effect be felt more strongly than in Atlantic Canada. It stands to reason that in times of austerity or economic downturn employers will think twice before hiring workers if they are forced to contribute a greater amount of money to unemployment insurance.

The Government plans to turn its back on the workers of Canada. Its arguments for doing so do not stand up to the crucible of careful analysis and reason. The first argument used to justify this reform is the alleged necessity of reducing the deficit. All this rhetoric about deficits plaguing the Canadian economy is just a smoke and mirror screen used by the Government to hide its true agenda, which is to cut social spending. Economists do not even agree among themselves as to whether or not the deficit and debt constitute a serious problem for our country. Moreover, a careful study of history tells us