

Unemployment Insurance Act

economically strong, but suffering from a terrible fever. The newspapers are reporting on this situation and, because we are the neighbours of this great country, when the economy of the United States is strained economically, automatically so is Canada's.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, we must take the necessary medicine to be able to recognize that, in our society, it is not normal to pay each week to the unemployed wages which are as high as those paid to the employed. The time has come for us to think about that, because it is shocking sometimes to hear some people tell us to our faces: Why work? Why get up early in the morning to get to work? The government chops off three quarters of the salaries through taxes and levies. Whereas when someone lives on unemployment insurance benefits or on social welfare, at least he does not waste his health nor his clothes, he does not make any effort and he gets as much as those who work.

An hon. Member: The average is \$74!

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): If the hon. member wishes to express his opinion, he should resume his seat and wait till his turn comes.

In this situation, we must consider things as they are. A great many employers could expand and produce more, which would help fight the plague of inflation, but they cannot get workers at salaries allowing them to produce at a cost which could bear foreign or national competition. Many very gifted industrialists are giving up the idea of expanding, creating employment, increasing their production and helping our country pull out of an economic situation that need not be desperate if the Canadian Parliament were willing to take the necessary steps to solve the situations that can be solved through appropriate legislation. Mr. Speaker, criticizing alone is useless; proposals must be made, measures passed to encourage workers to depend on work as the instrument that will enable them to earn a decent living.

Mr. Speaker, whoever earns a fairly high salary and who, because of a special situation, is laid off for reasons over which he has not control, should be given an amount equal to his salary, because his unemployment is accidental and will last only a few weeks. He will soon be called back by his employer and asked to reintegrate the work force. But whoever banks on an act that will allow him to go to work, at times nonchalantly, to then enable him to get unemployment insurance for 52 weeks, deserves a decrease in payments because he is not encouraged to work, to make a personal effort and contribute to our social and economic life. In fact, the amendments now proposed to the present act place on the same footing he who takes his work to heart and he who works reluctantly.

● (2100)

That is why, in my opinion, the amendment to the bill on unemployment insurance, Bill C-69, is not quite appropriate and why I support amendments 7, 8, 14 and 15 because they maintain the status quo in favour of those who want to work, to go back to work as soon as possible to earn a reasonable and decent living.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the consideration of a bill like Bill C-69, an Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Act, is a good opportunity for the House of Commons to remember the first law of work which was given us by our Creator and which says: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." We all agree, Mr. Speaker, to eat our bread in the sweat of our faces, but we do not want an economic system which has no respect for those who have such courage.

We want an economic system which would allow those who are willing to work to find a job; and if by accident they become unemployed, we want them to be protected by an adequate legislation which will uphold the sacredness of any human being who wants to earn a living through his work.

That is how I look at things, and that is how I wanted tonight to briefly tell you my thoughts, honestly and objectively, to induce a true reflection on those amendments to the act, so that those changes will provide incentives to those who want to work.

A lot of things can be achieved through work; work can change the whole economic aspect of a nation for it is disheartening for those who work, those who get up early, who go to work in spite of snow and ice, to see other people draw their curtains and make fun of them passing by.

Mr. Speaker, I think 800,000 unemployed in Canada is too much. We can control the situation by passing legislation to provide incentives to work and to encourage employers, businessmen, intelligent Canadians to give our nation what best they can offer through initiatives in keeping with their abilities and intelligence; those brave people could thus provide their fellow citizens with an economic development and a level of production which can be achieved here, and we would not have to import what we can produce in our country. Mr. Speaker, the Unemployment Insurance Act should be viewed in its true context. It is a legislation for particular circumstances, aimed at helping those who, as I said earlier, are accidentally faced with unemployment, so that they do not run into debts.

Such is the fraud of unemployment insurance, Mr. Speaker, and if we are not intelligent enough as members of parliament to view it in its real context we will by that very fact have failed to assume our responsibilities and generations to come will have to judge us; and if their judgment is severe, we will have to bow our heads and accept it.

[English]

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, mine will be a very short intervention. It seems to me that the government, in its effort to reduce the cost to the general taxpayer of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, has done very well by introducing at least three measures which are worthy of support.

It has increased the premiums to be paid by employers and employees, while at the same time increasing the moving average above which it must contribute to the plan. Formerly this was 4 per cent but the rate is now to be brought up to 5.6 per cent. It is also proposed to eliminate the measure commonly known as advanced payments. I find these measures commendable considering the fact that the government wishes, and understandably so, to