

• (2:40 p.m.)

We also welcome the attempt to encourage employers to phase out lay-offs more carefully than is sometimes the case. Here I refer to previous comments made in the House by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) and also the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) in reply to representations made about the matter by hon. members on this side. I refer particularly to the Hawker-Siddeley close-out in the city of Sydney which overnight put 3,000 people out of work, the Dunlop decision in Toronto, and many similar situations across the country.

At this moment, the unemployment insurance scheme has far too many weaknesses and abuses built into it. The idea proposed of three job interviews for people drawing unemployment benefits will be a step in the right direction. We wonder whether this represents the final victory of the Minister of Labour over the Minister of Manpower. The minister, quite correctly, placed emphasis on individual development. With this attention to full and meaningful employment, the minister has properly extended the perspective of this white paper to include responsibility for job placement, counselling and retraining. In doing so, he made reference to the Department of Manpower and Immigration and this is very timely.

However, I am very disappointed that he did not go further. The white paper speaks only of an efficient "pipeline" to the services and the responsibilities of the whole government, and this is not enough. If the minister is really ambitious about bringing our manpower, counselling and job opportunity efforts up to contemporary standards, the white paper should have gone much further. A counselling service under the aegis of the Unemployment Insurance Commission will be of little help if it is simply a referral service to the incompetent and inadequate Department of Manpower.

In accepting the totality of the challenge, the white paper should have either made a thorough analysis of the state of the manpower department or it should have called for an immediate and open investigation of the manpower department. This cannot be evaded. The Department of Manpower and Immigration is ultimately responsible for these services and it must be reformed. In fact, I would not hesitate to suggest that it should be reformed to the extent that this minister should be made responsible both for manpower and for unemployment insurance, because

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the present Minister of Manpower does not seem to have very much influence in the cabinet under this Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

Until we have further details we must remain cautious about the effects of this new scheme on workers who regularly undergo prolonged seasonal unemployment. While some mention is made of exempting self-employed fishermen, we must have more details than are available to us at this time before being too enthusiastic about the proposals in this area.

However, if one wants to rationalize the universality of the scheme there should be no mistake about the effect. It is a great new tax increase being imposed on very substantial numbers of Canadians, at least 1.16 million wage earners. Whether they will be satisfied with the government's proposed attempts to buy them off with sickness and pregnancy insurance remains to be seen.

This Trojan horse is being paraded before us as reform of unemployment insurance. Many will be so concerned about seeing that present abuses are eliminated that the bootleg compulsory sickness insurance scheme may be overlooked. This scheme involves compulsory sickness insurance. It may be a good thing, but it is not something that this government should embark on without long and careful discussion by the members of this House, by the members of provincial governments who might well think this matter lies within their jurisdiction, and by the Canadian public. This proposal should receive the kind of thorough-going public attention that was accorded to the previous compulsory welfare schemes—pensions, hospital insurance and medical insurance.

I wonder where the Prime Minister's statement that there will be no more medicare fiascos stands now? This compulsory sickness insurance program has all the attributes of another medicare scheme. What of the costs involved here? We are led to believe that as long as unemployment remains below 4 per cent the new fund will be self-sustaining, that it will not require assistance from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Unemployment in this country has not been below 4 per cent, even at the best time of the year, for almost three years. This fund will require substantial amounts of money from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Where will the fund get that money from? How much will it amount to? The government has not even given us any estimates. Does it not know? If it does not, then it is being horribly irresponsible here as