

UI bill moves along

OTTAWA (CUP)—A controversial bill considerably tightening the requirements for unemployment insurance was approved in principle by the House of Commons November 10.

But it's not clear when, if ever, it will receive final approval.

The bill must now go to a Commons standing committee for detailed study, before being brought back to the House for third reading and final approval.

And, if the NDP has anything to say about it, it may never get out of that stage before next spring's federal election.

The bill was approved by a voice vote November 10 after Conservative MP James McGrath said his party opposed the principle of the bill but wanted to put it into committee where detailed amendments could be made.

McGrath, the PC social policy critic, suggested the bill be changed so that it would not hurt claimants in the Atlantic provinces or Quebec, "where unemployment insurance has become a way of life because unemployment has become a way of life".

The House had only debated the bill for two days.

When the changes were

first announced by Employment and Immigration Minister Bud Cullen in September, he said he hoped they could be passed before January so that some of the changes could be implemented by January 1.

However, according to NDP unemployment critic John Rodriguez, they won't be passed by then "if I can help it".

"We made a goof once (when the NDP let it go through second reading quickly), but it's not going to happen again. I expect it's going to be a long time before it ever goes to third reading."

The NDP will be proposing

a large number of amendments while the bill is in committee and during third reading, he said.

"There's no point in hiring people if people don't have money to buy goods."

Among the changes are a reduction in benefits from 66-2/3% of wages to 60%, longer periods of work to be eligible if a person has already claimed UI within the last year, and longer periods of eligibility for those entering the labour force for the first time or after a long absence.

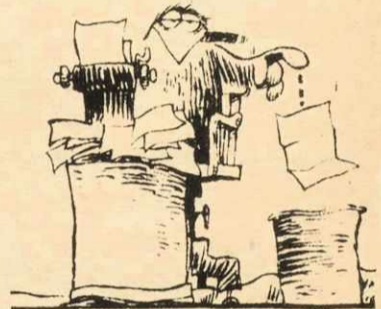
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Junior high walk out

COQUITLAM, B.C. (CPA-CUP)—About 500 students at Winslow junior secondary school here have walked out of their classes, saying they would not return until a four-day school week was implemented.

School principal Gordon House said that the incident began during a debate on the subject in a communications class when the students were discussing the various hours of work insisted upon by trade unions. They then started talking about shorter work weeks in the schools, he said, but all the time it was just a theoretical discussion.

The communications class distributed opinion surveys to other pupils and many of them took the subject seriously, House said.

One Grade 10 student, who said he was one of the strike leaders, said he did not know how long the strike would last. The principal, who has arranged a meeting with the students, said the four-day school week is impractical because our society is not ready for it.

"There's just no way in which we could implement the four-day school week," he said.

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