

In the United States a full employment bill is seen as a necessary legislative framework to achieve full employment. Such a commitment has never been adopted in Canada. The equal opportunity and full employment act before the United States Congress and Senate defines full employment as a "situation under which there are useful and rewarding employment opportunities for all adult Americans willing and able to work." The Americans talk about full employment for all Americans willing and able to work, yet we receive a constant revision of the idea of full employment from the government.

At one time the government and its economic advisers considered acceptable unemployment to be 3 per cent of the labour force, then later it was increased to 4 per cent, and now the government talks about a much larger figure. A few years ago a system was adopted through the Unemployment Insurance Act whereby the more government failed, the greater number of people unemployed, the higher the percentage of the labour force unemployed, the more we paid our share of the unemployment insurance deficit. There is a built-in incentive for the government to fail, because the greater the amount of unemployment the less the government is required to pay. This is the situation which we are facing.

● (2102)

The minister, in various speeches inside and outside the House, has indicated there is a great desire on the part of Canadian people for a tightening up of unemployment insurance programs. He has indicated that the government wants to make unemployment insurance programs less generous, and wants to encourage the unemployed to take work. He has suggested there is a belief on the part of the public that many jobs are unfilled because the unemployed are unwilling to work.

On what does the minister base that belief? He bases it on a so-called marketing research study on unemployment insurance which was commissioned by his department and published in September, 1978. There is an indication on the first page that it contains "public reaction to proposed 'information on hiring' procedure". It states that it is "a survey of public opinion for: Employment and Immigration Canada", and was prepared by Contemporary Research Centre Limited.

Let me refer the minister to page 25 of that so-called survey which contains some of the questions which were asked. The first question or statement to which an answer is required is:

Stricter controls are needed to ensure that unemployment insurance benefits do not go to people who will not take a job.

That statement received an 87 per cent favourable response. Anybody who has given any thought to the subject will know that the answers one gets depend to a large extent on the questions one asks. If one asks: when did you stop beating your wife, or have you stopped beating your wife, you will get a different answer than if you were to ask a sensible question.

Supposing instead of asking that kind of question about unemployment insurance the minister had asked a similar question about income tax, what do you suppose the favourable response might have been? Let me suggest a question to

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the minister. Suppose the survey had asked the following question: do you believe that the people at the upper income levels in this country do not pay their fair share of income taxes? I am sure he would have received more than the 87 per cent favourable response. He would likely have received a 97 per cent favourable response. Instead of asking the question that was asked in this survey, if it had asked, or suggested: many people in the upper income brackets take advantage of loopholes in the Income Tax Act in order to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, what percentage of favourable response would that have received? I would suggest it would receive a 95 per cent favourable response.

The survey then requested a response to the following statement:

The new stiffer requirement to get unemployment insurance is a step in the right direction.

That received a 72 per cent favourable response. Supposing the survey had asked, or made the statement to which a response was required: the new stiffer requirements to make sure that people do not use loopholes in the Income Tax Act in order to avoid paying their fair share of income tax, what response do you expect that would have received? I suggest it would have received a 95 per cent favourable response, particularly if it had been asked of people working for wages and salaries, about the self-employed, doctors, lawyers and architects.

I suggest to the minister that this was not a fair survey and does not really represent what the people think. The minister received answers to questions predetermined or designed to elicit the kind of answers the government wanted, because the government was determined to cut down on the amount of money it has to pay out in unemployment insurance benefits to those who are unemployed.

The solution to the unemployment problem will not be found by forcing people to accept work they do not want. The solution to the problem is not to suggest to teachers, social workers, and others that they should take jobs mopping floors. The solution to the problem will be found when the government finds the jobs it promised the young people would be available when it encouraged them to go to colleges and universities.

We have the best educated and trained group of young people Canada has ever had, but what are we saying to them? We are telling them there are no jobs in this country in the fields in which they have been trained, and no jobs in the fields in which we encouraged them to study and labour for two, three, four or five years. We are saying that there are no jobs that will be financially rewarding, and no jobs that will be satisfactory in terms of the jobs for which they have been trained and which this country requires. That is what we are saying to them when we turn the screws on unemployment insurance regulations. We are telling them to take any job, regardless of past experience or education. We are telling them they have to take jobs because, if they do not take them, they will not receive unemployment insurance benefits. We are saying this as though it was their fault there are no jobs.