

**Senator Perrault:** Defend that one!

**Senator MacEachen:** Of course, the Atlantic region and Quebec are the hardest hit.

**Senator Guay:** Senator Flynn does not know that.

**Senator MacEachen:** I am simply asking, should we not know? Furthermore, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives also produced a study, with the help of Tristat Resources Limited, the consulting firm responsible for the statistical and analytical work of the Forget Commission, which yielded results much closer to those of the Liberal Party and the CLC than to the study undertaken by the government through its commission. This particular study concluded that the gross cut in unemployment insurance benefits will amount to \$1.8 billion, as opposed to the \$1.2 billion predicted by the government. Would it not be a good idea for the Senate to find out whether it is \$1.2 billion or \$1.8 billion, because every dollar of UI benefits affects an unemployed Canadian. Have we become so casual in our attitude toward the unemployed that we no longer care whether they are hammered by \$1.2 billion or \$1.8 billion in loss of income? So I submit that the proposal before us is irresponsible in the extreme—

● (1750)

**Senator Stollery:** Absolutely.

**Senator MacEachen:** It would be irresponsible to pass the bill without knowing the impact.

**Senator Guay:** They do not know any better.

**Senator MacEachen:** It is not as if these studies were the only source of information on the impact. We had testimony, as I referred to yesterday, from several provincial governments. The Province of Newfoundland, the Province of Prince Edward Island and the Province of Nova Scotia all said that the impact will be devastating. The minister from Newfoundland said that the impact combined with the fisheries crisis is the most devastating event in the history of Newfoundland.

**Senator Perrault:** How can they pass it?

**Senator MacEachen:** Should we not look at that to find out whether or not it is a fact? Then came the representative from Prince Edward Island, which is hardest hit of all. That province will lose \$12 million as a result of the change in the variable entrance requirements. Should we not be looking at that to see if there is some way in which we can reduce the burden on Prince Edward Island, which loses \$12 million on that one change when the national loss to the unemployed is \$130 million? Prince Edward Island will therefore be asked to take up about 10 per cent of the burden. Is there a way that that could be modified so that the smallest province is not the hardest hit? I find it necessary to argue that the Senate has a moral obligation to examine this bill and, where possible, to present amendments to the bill for consideration by the Senate.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

**Senator MacEachen:** I must say that I find the attitude of my colleagues opposite almost as if they are living in a fairly

land, in a land of make-believe, as if they do not know what is happening in Canada.

**Senator Guay:** They don't!

**Senator MacEachen:** They don't know what is happening in the Atlantic provinces.

**Senator Perrault:** And they don't care!

**Senator MacEachen:** Does anyone across the way know what is happening in Atlantic Canada?

**Senator Haidasz:** Speak up!

**Senator MacEachen:** There was an article in the *Globe and Mail* on December 12 entitled "Tough times down East continue to get tougher", and I demonstrated yesterday that the unemployment rates in three of the four Atlantic provinces are higher than ever. I believe Prince Edward Island has a higher September and October unemployment rate now than it had at the height of the worldwide recession. In this most serious period of unemployment we are bringing in a bill that will have a very adverse effect on that part of Canada that is most adversely affected by unemployment.

**Senator Perrault:** Unbelievable!

**Senator MacEachen:** The article entitled "Tough times down East continue to get tougher" says:

The devastation of the offshore fishery comes at a hard time for Newfoundland. Hibernia has been delayed, a proposal to develop Labrador hydro-electric power has come unglued, and more stringent changes to unemployment insurance take effect in January.

We are expected to pass the bill without examining the questions that I am raising.

Then the article turns to Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

In Summerside, PEI, where Ottawa is closing the area's major employer, the 1300-member Canadian Forces base, the townfolk are literally worried sick, some local doctors are saying.

Yesterday Senator Phillips did not seem to be in phase—

**Senator Guay:** He does not know about it.

**Senator MacEachen:** —with the worry of the people of Summerside.

One said recently that he is seeing more patients suffering from depression, headaches and insomnia than ever. Summerside residents have petitioned their government to import mental-health specialists from Alberta—the great roulette player of the resource provinces—to help people deal with the uncertainty in their future.

We know that fish-plant closings are in the offing in Canso. Lockeport has already had its hammering. St John's, North Sydney and all of these towns have had fish-plant closings that will add to the unemployment I have described, and at the same time we are bringing in the most draconian amendments to our unemployment insurance system ever. We are withdrawing government support for that system.