

business. We will leave you to the mercy of people who are not just taxpayers of Canada but are employers and employees"—for the government to do that is a classic example of how incredibly uncaring and unfeeling this government has become.

I ask honourable senators to look at Senator Simard's position and the positions put forward by others on his side, which is essentially that we really ought to go back to Nova Scotia and the Atlantic provinces and say to the fishermen, "Don't worry; you can trust the Prime Minister." The last poll showed that 79 per cent of Canadians do not trust the Prime Minister. I suspect the percentage for the Atlantic provinces runs somewhere over 90 per cent. So it seems to me a ridiculous proposition to expect senators on our side of the house and senators from our region of the country to allow this bill to go through the way it is on the basis that we should trust the government.

In closing, let me make one other comment in reference to something said yesterday by Senator Simard at the end of his remarks.

Senator Guay: He said a lot of things.

Senator Kirby: He said:

I challenge them—
meaning the Liberals—

to kill the bill. I for one will not accept those amendments.
I am quite comfortable with Bill C-21.

It seems to me that since 1984 the senators on our side of the house have used their majority very judiciously. We have not attempted to abuse the powers that go with the majority in a bicameral legislature. We have attempted to use our power wisely. However, when we are faced with a bill which does what Bill C-21 does to fishermen at a time when they are in desperate straits, it seems to me, in response to Senator Simard's challenge, that it is time for the people on our side of the house and, indeed, for all Atlantic Canada senators in this chamber to say, "Enough is enough." At some point, somewhere along the line, one must recognize that one has responsibility in this chamber to stand up for those people who are unable to stand up for themselves or defend themselves. So, honourable senators, in response to Senator Simard's challenge, it is my personal view—and I emphasize that it is my personal view, a view about which I feel strongly—it is my personal view that, unless fishermen's unemployment insurance benefits are restored under unemployment insurance, unless the amendments that Senator Thériault has introduced, and unless the corresponding linkages required in the report of the committee are met, this bill should not pass this house, and it is my intention to vote against it.

Hon. Heath Macquarrie: Honourable senators, if he will permit, I should like to ask the distinguished senator a question before he resumes his seat.

Senator Kirby: Yes.

Senator Macquarrie: Considering that the honourable senator mentioned that great things were done under the St.

[Senator Kirby.]

Laurent government in 1958, would he not, upon reflection, agree that the Prime Minister of Canada at that time was that great champion of the Maritimes and of the average Canadian, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker?

Senator Kirby: I thank the honourable senator for his comment. I should have been absolutely precise, because, in fact, it was not Prime Minister Diefenbaker who made the change. The changes were introduced and passed prior to the 1957 election. There was a one-year delay, beginning in April 1957, during which fishermen were allowed to contribute to unemployment insurance. It was in April 1958 that fishermen's unemployment insurance benefits began. I am sorry if I attempted to give credit to Prime Minister Diefenbaker for something for which he clearly was not responsible.

Senator Macquarrie: I encourage you to go on to say how well they were extended under the Diefenbaker administration.

Hon. George van Roggen: As a British Columbian, I should say that it was that great British Columbian Liberal politician, the Honourable James Sinclair, the then Minister of Fisheries in the St. Laurent Government, who introduced that legislation.

Senator Doody: I hope Jack Pickersgill is not listening!

[Translation]

Senator Simard: Honourable senators, I have a question for Senator Kirby, if he allows me.

I do not know if we can speak of the same context as Senator MacEachen spoke of yesterday. I do not know if it is in the same spirit of negotiation referred to yesterday by Senator MacEachen. I wonder if it is in that same spirit that you agree to take up the challenge, Senator Kirby, and to kill this bill. So when you say that you care so much about Senator Thériault's amendment that you are even prepared to accept the challenge of killing Bill C-21, am I to take that part of your statement to mean, Senator Kirby, that you would be prepared to drop the other amendments and recommendations contained in the Hébert report now being debated and to keep only the one presented by Senator Thériault on fishermen's benefits?

● (1530)

[English]

Senator Kirby: Honourable senators, lest there be any confusion whatsoever, I not only support completely the report of the committee and the amendments contained therein, I also strongly support Senator Thériault's amendment.

The point I was trying to make—and I think it is an important one—is that since 1984 there have been many occasions in this chamber on which the majority of members have decided, after putting considerable pressure on the government and after having gotten some changes from the government, to back down. The point I was trying to make is that—and I emphasize I am speaking personally and not on behalf of all of my colleagues—we would be making a grievous error for the people of our region if we were to back down on