

*Supply—Labour*

It will be seen that the item and the sections of the Appropriation Act limit the item to the last fiscal year.

**Mr. Knowles:** So far we just have to take your word for it.

**Mr. McIlraith:** I hope my word is correct.

**Mr. Churchill:** The preamble to the act says that.

**Mr. McIlraith:** That is the difficulty. It is a case of not being able to use money of last year for the present fiscal year and not having the authority this year to make the transfer, so it is a matter of clearing up the rather technical requirements of the legislation as it stood.

**Mr. Starr:** Was an appropriation made yesterday in the amount of \$15 million either by order in council or in some other form?

**Mr. McIlraith:** No. I was rather surprised to hear the assertion by the Leader of the Opposition to that effect, but there was no such grant made.

**Mr. Martin (Timmins):** Mr. Chairman, we live in a rather strange world. I have sat in the house for some seven years and in every one of those seven years have heard the minister of labour tell the house about how rosy the employment picture is, how it is improving all the time, how every year it is a little better than last year and how it is certainly better than when the terrible former government had the reins of office in their hands. In spite of this here we find ourselves sitting on a Wednesday night, which is a strange experience, in the middle of an Easter recess, which is also a strange experience, and once more being told by the Minister of Labour how much better the unemployment picture is than it was before, merely because we have lost another \$14 million out of the unemployment insurance fund in the last year.

I am not sure of the exact figure but I believe that in 1957 when I came here the unemployment insurance fund stood at approximately \$950 million or \$960 million. I did a quick addition of the minister's figures tonight and, unless I got the figures wrong, the fund has dropped \$879 million since 1957. We had \$950 million or \$960 million in 1957 and I distinctly recall that on two occasions the house voted \$25 million to spruce up the fund. Last year we voted another \$55 million, making a total in all of well over \$1 billion. I would say it is about time that the house and the country should be given a few more facts in regard to the fund and a little less propaganda from the government of the day.

However, Mr. Chairman, I should like to speak primarily on another matter tonight. It is a problem that disturbs me considerably and one that has been growing and growing as the months have gone by. I think the practice involved is becoming quite prevalent across the country because I have heard of it happening not only in my own area but in many other areas. In fact, I have even had workers in Ottawa come to me and ask me to try to help them out of similar situations.

At first I thought the practice was confined to some of the local officials in the unemployment insurance offices, but from a letter I received today from the minister I find that if the minister's office is not encouraging or implementing this policy they are at least going along with it holus-bolus. I think I have found something to indicate the reason that the loss in the unemployment insurance fund is not as bad this year as last year. It may be due in part to this practice which is growing up. In my opinion it is a very insidious practice and should be stopped.

The best illustration I can think of has to do with a man in my constituency who has a crippled leg. He was employed at the Adams mine in Kirkland Lake, some 80 miles from Timmins and about 50 miles from his home town of Val Gagne which is halfway between Kirkland Lake and Timmins. The minister states in his letter that his information is that this man was fired because he was caught sleeping on the job. But this is not quite as bad as it may seem, as expressed in those base words.

The man was employed as a cage tender. I would point out to those hon. members who are not familiar with mining terms that a cage tender is very similar to an elevator operator. On any job where an elevator or cage of this nature is being used and the operator is on the graveyard shift, and only gets a call maybe every hour and a half or two hours, it is quite understandable that if he is warm and comfortable he may doze off. I do not think this is a terrible thing because if anybody wants the cage all he has to do is ring the bell and the tender will answer it, unless he is sleeping so soundly that he does not hear it. My colleague says that as an old fireman I do not sleep through bells and that is very true. The mine for which this man was working had a policy that anyone caught sleeping would be automatically discharged. The man was discharged, and because he was discharged for cause he was subject to the normal six-week disqualification as far as unemployment insurance is concerned. After that time however he qualified for unemployment insurance. Some time later this man, who does not speak very