

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT, 1971 (No. 1) PROVISION FOR APPROPRIATION TO BE DEEMED ADVANCE

[Translation]

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andras that Bill C-124, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 (No. 1), be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, when the House took recess, I was saying that we should not add another element which would result in creating a problem through some hesitation of issuing cheques for fear that the fund of the Commission be depleted. The unemployed have such a hard time getting paid nowadays that if ever some functionary—who decides to function from time to time—learned that there is no more money in the fund, we would be in great difficulty.

One must try to be serious especially after having adopted an act dealing with unemployment insurance which lacks flexibility and complicates the unemployed's life with administrative red tape which contributes in delaying payment of benefits. Futile discussions should not however delay the adoption of a bill to grant cash advances to the commission and the payment of benefits to the unemployed.

Yesterday, a well qualified speaker, a parliamentarian who is much familiar with the Standing Orders and with procedure, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), after referring to various pension plans and to the possibilities of obtaining funds, stated as recorded in *Hansard*, and I quote:

The Canada Assistance Plan works much the same way. In that case, the federal government even underwrites what the provinces do.

As long as the provinces meet certain conditions laid down in the Canada Assistance Plan, they can pay supplements to their pensioners, get various programs under way in the social welfare field and collect 50 per cent of the cost from Ottawa. Nowhere is there any ceiling or provision that says they cannot get this when they exceed a certain amount of money. What is it that is wrong with unemployed people, in the minds of my friends to the right, that they must be pilloried in the way they are being pilloried in this House tonight and being told that they cannot get their money?

It is quite clear though. What the government is asking for the time being is nothing outstanding, that is to advance monies to the fund. It is only a type of loan, something we are used to for we lend millions of dollars to almost every country of the world, and we would hesitate to advance money to Canada's unemployed! We find ourselves in a very uncomprehensible situation.

I understand that in the area of unemployment, it is sometimes difficult to establish everyone's responsibilities with accuracy; so many factors must be taken into account. However, no serious observer can help concluding that lack of money is the determining factor. The lack of money leads to unemployment. At the present time, we are faced with a shortage of funds to pay the unemployed!

Unemployment Insurance Act

Under the circumstances, I am very pleased to say that all my colleagues from the Social Credit are ready to support the bill and to hasten its passage so that the unemployed will never suffer as a result of the late payment of their allowances.

Unemployment which has reached an alarming extent is due to a restricted monetary flow—but let us not take any action to restrict it further—in various fields of economic activities, as a result of which the unconscious supporters of the present unbalanced financial system, who are often represented in Parliament by a Minister of Finance who juggles with figures, taxes and exorbitant debts and loans, are responsible for those conditions.

If one asks the unemployed what is the cause of his constant concern, he will answer: I am not drawing enough income to ensure my livelihood and that of my family.

He lives from day to day with his fear of tomorrow. There are still people who take the means to create still more concern. This illness is spreading at such a vertiginous pace that a provincial minister of labour has once stated that he could see the end of the present unemployment crisis, which could put Canadians in the not so fortunate prospect of a revolution. These remarks have been published and commented by the media.

During this period, we see, one after the other, the defenders of the system which has resulted in unemployment resorting to every available means to make thousands of unemployed believe that the government is doing all it can to assist them, by considering development programs, readjusting rates of benefits and, since this is the fashion, publishing white papers or papers of any other colour, as required.

But for the time being the question of unemployment insurance will come back for discussion in the House and we shall talk again of the legislation and its necessary amendments. Right now, we must hasten to pass this legislation which would guarantee to the unemployed the income they need.

[English]

Mr. Peter Reilly (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, it is a very serious matter that we are discussing tonight and I hesitate to do what I am about to do. We have had caucuses on this matter and I have discussed it with my colleagues. I know that I will not make myself terribly popular by what I am going to say, but I must disagree with some of the remarks of my colleague from Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) who spoke in this debate last night. I am sorry to have to disagree with those remarks and I hope, while he might be angry with me for a while, that our friendship which has been of relatively long standing will not be permanently upset by what I now propose to say.

He said, among other things, that the government's demeanour in the handling of this bill brings into question its competence and integrity. I cannot agree with that, Mr. Speaker. I cannot agree with it because it is impossible to call into question something that never existed in the first place. This is true of the demeanour of the government in almost every undertaking that we have been exposed to in this House and it has been particularly true of the demeanour