

Figures presented by the minister to the committee showed where most of the unemployment insurance money goes in this country. A great deal of unemployment insurance benefits goes to the maritimes, for example, and similarly in parts of Quebec a great deal of money is transferred from the central fund of the Unemployment Insurance Commission directly into the hands of people in areas of high unemployment.

We have said, and it is a truism indeed, that the answer to the problem of the Unemployment Insurance Commission is unemployment itself. But the government is not addressing itself to the problems of unemployment in Canada. Bill C-73 does nothing about unemployment, it does nothing about the 82 per cent of plant capacity we are using at the moment, and it does nothing about the 700,000 people who are idle. Instead the government proposes to redefine the unemployment insurance rate and to tackle the old unemployment insurance act.

We in this party object to the removal of the dependency rate from the Unemployment Insurance Act. The reasons given for a dependency rate when the act was introduced in 1971 are as justifiable today as then. Those who are receiving this dependency rate need it. From my experience, those who are on benefits, those who come to the M.P.'s office for help with the commission are the poor people, the least educated, those who have great difficulty reading and understanding the act and the application forms. People who are wise and can handle the reading level of the application form and the act can certainly handle themselves when it comes to obtaining benefits.

This particular aspect of the government's proposal is one which we cannot support. We feel that removing the dependency rate can only acerbate the problem and, as a result, we recommend support for motions Nos. 7 and 8.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make just a few comments on the motions that are now before us, that is motions nos. 7, 8, 14 and 15, which have been grouped together by authority of the Chair. Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago, the hon. members of this House went to the other place where Royal Assent was given to a few bills. This is an interesting and impressive ceremony that should urge us, as members of Parliament, to think more about our responsibilities and to consider very carefully the various bills that will become laws after they receive Royal Assent, laws that all Canadian taxpayers should obey and respect.

Therefore, it is our duty to thoroughly discuss all bills before us at their various stages and to amend them, if need be, in the most efficient way to make them as sound as possible and consistent with our way of life, so that Canadians who are called upon to respect and observe the laws passed by Parliament may have absolute confidence in them.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the amendments proposed under motions 7, 8, 14 and 15 should be studied in the most objective way as they are of interest to all members. It often reflected on the Unemployment Insurance Act. As the number of unemployed is rising alarmingly in our country, more Canadians must have recourse to this legislation to get benefits for which they have paid.

#### *Unemployment Insurance Act*

As it is presented, the bill provides for reduced benefits for several groups of claimants. As it was passed by Parliament some years ago, the legislation aimed at protecting workers who were occasionally and accidentally unemployed against running into debt. They were asked to contribute to a fund in order to get some benefits during their period of accidental unemployment.

I recall that when I was secretary in a municipality, I often had to fill forms for workers who became accidentally unemployed to help them benefit from this legislation during their period of unemployment and, if my memory serves me well, the amount of the benefits was much lower than today. It was \$14 a week for workers with a family and less for single persons.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, I think that because of an economic situation that could be corrected by this Parliament if we really wanted, if we really assumed our responsibilities, because of an economic situation compelling many people to stay inactive and unemployed.

● (2050)

As the situation worsened, the Canadian government brought forward some amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act, as regards the weekly amounts to be paid. But, in 1971, the act was amended in such a way that one was entitled to get, if one had a dependant, 75 per cent of one's salary. I think that at that time, the House of Commons passed a wise legislation that recognized the responsibilities of the head of the family towards his dependants.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-69 is to reduce benefits from 75 to 66⅔ per cent of the worker's salary. In my opinion, we will be failing in our duty if we pass this bill in its present form. Actually, if we are to admit that a person has the responsibility of one or more dependants, we have to provide him with an additional benefit, to allow him to meet his obligations. I understand the principle that says "equal pay for equal work". This is a well-known principle of economics, which emphasizes the truly human aspect of our country, and of our statutes. We wanted to recognize in our laws a basic right, the responsibility of individuals with a dependent wife or children.

We should not move backward. We should continue to progress and keep this legislation into effect to enable those who have greater responsibilities to enjoy higher benefits. While those motions are under consideration, I would suggest some amendments which I think are quite effective. I admit that when an employer has an unmarried person or the head of a family who render him equivalent services, he must pay them alike. However, since we live in society and must encourage those who assume the responsibility of raising children to give the best to society, that is human capital, through our laws we must promote the fulfilment of that vital cell called the family and recognize to the head of a family the right to a supplement enabling him to face his responsibilities. I am tempted to say something. What I will say will not fetch votes for a politician who wants to get re-elected, but we must at times take risks and we must speak plainly and this is what I want to do this evening when I say the following.

Mr. Speaker, Canada is going through very difficult times, being the neighbour of a great country which is