

the individual, their well-being, their ability to deal with life, not to mention the family.

● (1632)

Let me quote from a speech made on April 20, 1971, when the new act was passed. It was made by the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner), who is still the hon. member for London East. It reads:

I must emphasize that the lower qualifying requirements have been proposed only after a considerable amount of research and study centred around the motivation of the individual, the needs of a worker when faced with a loss of earnings, and the ever-changing composition of our society, which brings with it a reshaping of the labour force and its attendant dislocation of individuals. The results of these studies have shown us that no rigid guidelines are available from which we could formulate a hard and fast rule for qualifying, but there are indications that current conditions require a re-orientation of our thinking in terms of providing protection and assistance to members of the labour force. Therefore, we must look to our objectives in deciding on a level of minimum attachment.

That speech went on to refer to what it was like to be unemployed and what the Canadian worker was up against when he faced unemployment. Today that spirit seems to be dead on that side of the House. Their Christmas present this year for the unemployed worker is a reduction in his or her benefits of 10 per cent, at a time when welfare payments, old age pensions and workmen's compensation benefits are increasing to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living. In this case the government has taken one critical weapon in the fight against poverty and the maintenance of income for the families of these working men and women and has singled it out for special attention.

It is unbelievable that welfare payments are going up while unemployment insurance benefits are going down. Families can now get more from welfare programs than from the unemployment insurance program. It is a guaranteed incentive for those people to stay at home and not join the work force. Perhaps that is what the government wants, to see women and youth, who are often part-time employees and unable to achieve the sufficient number of hours to qualify for unemployment, leave the unemployment insurance system and go to the welfare system. That is their philosophy.

Mr. Boulanger: It is the demagogy of the NDP.

Mr. Rae: The hon. member has said it is demagogy. I do not think that is fair. The hon. member for Mercier (Mr. Boulanger) has said that I am a demagogue. That is a very unfair charge because, like an archaeologist, we go with the evidence which is before us and the footprints are there. They are the footprints of dinosaurs. The government is not walking in Bryce Mackasey's footprints; it is walking in the footprints of dinosaurs.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I suggest to hon. members that we get back to the motion under discussion.

Mr. Rae: If I have wandered from the path, Mr. Speaker, it is because of some hon. members opposite. If one looks at the

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philosophy which underlies this clause and the other clauses, it is completely incoherent but at the same time it is a reactionary attack on unemployed people at a time when the world recognizes that unemployment is not the problem of the individual worker but of society.

The government has not decided whether the program is an insurance scheme; therefore they have raised the question of overpayment of benefits. Part of the underlying philosophy of this bill seems to be that the government would like to go back to an insurance scheme to help tighten things up. However, they also say that they will collect back benefits paid to people earning more than \$18,000, which turns it into a welfare scheme, a needs-related scheme. If it is a needs-related scheme, it does not relate to the needs of Canadians. Their needs cost much more than the maximum of \$240 which the government proposes.

The metropolitan social planning council of Toronto in its report two weeks ago said that a family of four in that city requires \$14,000 to live above the poverty line. This bill does not provide for that fact. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) has brought in a scheme which provides tax credits to families making less than \$18,000. This is a small step in the right direction, but the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) is taking that away with the stroke of a pen.

This government cannot make up its mind where it stands with regard to income security and income maintenance. It says that we are filibustering this bill and taking our time, and that is quite correct. We are doing everything we can to explain to the people of Canada that this measure combines an incoherence of thought and purpose with a reactionary philosophy that needs to be exposed. We all have our different styles in exposing it. If the hon. member for Nickel Belt can use colourful language, then more power to him.

What our purpose in committee was, and what our purpose is this week, is not to talk for the sake of talking, but to attempt to get across to Canadians, who may be confused and uncertain as to exactly what the abuses of the unemployment system are, what the program is, and explain that the amendments which have been proposed by the government—many of which are supported by the Conservative party—will quite simply have the effect of reducing the income of working Canadians and Canadians who are not working but would like to be.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra has attacked the New Democratic Party, saying that we do not care about spending, about who pays for these programs, and that we would like all of Canada to be unemployed and drawing unemployment insurance benefits. That is reactionary twaddle which has no substance. This party would like to see all Canadians working. There are now nearly one million unemployed in Canada, or over one million by any definition other than that of the government. I should like those people to be able to lead a decent life. I should like the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra to indicate what level he thinks is appropriate and what a 10 per cent cut in benefits will mean to people