

Supply

ment. In my speech I neglected to draw attention to the fact that the Armed Forces pensioners of this country wrote a letter to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Nielsen) on the issue because they were very concerned about superannuation as well as their pensions. They got a reply from his sidekick, the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Andre), who first wrote a very glowing letter thanking them for their concerns about pensions and saying that the Government would take them into consideration. Subsequently he threatened to take criminal action against them if they continued to use the name Canadian Armed Forces Pensioners' Association. He claimed that the use of the words "Canadian Armed Forces" was a violation of military law. If they did not revoke that name they would be court-martialled or, in the civil sense, subject to conviction under the Criminal Code, which could result in a \$500 fine or six months in jail.

● (1730)

So you can understand that while I appreciate the goodwill of the Member sitting beside me, it is unfortunate that that same goodwill has not been expressed by that very Minister whose responsibility it is to defend the rights of the people and of the Armed Forces. I think that this is a disgrace and that the Associate Minister of Defence should know better.

Mr. Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. Resuming debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations): I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate and to announce to the Opposition that I intend to vote against this motion, not because of party discipline but as a matter of principle, and because I believe that the Opposition has failed to provide sufficient grounds for this motion. Mr. Speaker, my stand on this particular matter, even if anyone threatens to tell it to the world—in any case, the debates in the House are public—my stand is as firm as the one I took when I announced in public that I was against all forms of indexation at any level whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that I am 44 years old, I have never been on unemployment insurance and I hope to spend the rest of my life without drawing unemployment insurance benefits. The message we get depends on whom you talk to. We hear people saying when they are 35 or 40, and I say they are right: Mr. Hudon or Mr. so and so, I would rather have a job than draw unemployment insurance benefits, because there is nothing more humiliating and distressing for a man or a woman to draw unemployment insurance benefits. And I heartily agree.

And now, all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, one year before retirement, when they do have an income, it is no longer humiliating to draw unemployment insurance benefits, it is almost a right. And who are we talking about now? We are not talking about people in their thirties or forties, but about

the individual who leaves his job, either voluntarily or involuntarily, although in 95 per cent of the cases, at 64 or one year before retirement, it is voluntarily because the companies oblige them to retire early, supposedly in order to create jobs for young people, which are often subsidized by the Government. So we are talking about that kind of person.

They have been telling us from the start: They will lose everything. For a person to lose unemployment insurance benefits altogether, that person has to have earnings of at least \$371 a week. This adds up to an annual income of \$19,000. So this individual is already earning \$19,000 a year. He is losing \$15,000 in income, so if we add up \$19,000 plus \$15,000, we get \$34,000 a year, and this is the same person who is forced to sell his home.

If you have to sell your home when your earnings are \$34,000, either your payments are too large or your house is too expensive.

Mr. Speaker, \$371 a week is the norm. And these are the people we are talking about today. We are not talking about people below the poverty line. I agree that \$371 a week is not great, but it is certainly not nothing.

And who is more to be pitied, Mr. Speaker? The individual who has a weekly income of \$371, plus unemployment insurance benefits, or the individual who is getting unemployment insurance benefits only, totalling \$297 a month? Who is the worst off? And those are the people we are talking about today, Mr. Speaker.

So we are talking about someone who has a weekly income or \$371 and who leaves his job and wants to receive unemployment insurance benefits on top of that because, Mr. Speaker, it is a right. We are not talking about people who have less than \$371 a week. No! Today, we are not talking about people who work less than 15 hours a week. We are only talking about this particular group. And they say it is a crying shame.

Mr. Speaker, all the retired and early retired Canadians I have met, who say they are not entitled to unemployment insurance, are people who have a solid income. We are going to help the needy.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin by reading an article by Alain Dubuc in *La Presse* of March 26, 1986, the last paragraph where he comments on another program. He writes: "Finally, to be as prosaic one can be, this entire story..."—he is referring to Katimavik—"...properly depicts the federal Government financial predicament. It shows how one can build up a \$30 billion deficit, and it explains why it is so difficult to make cut-backs."

Mr. Speaker, it has been described as an underhanded approach, as a recent decision which is inequitable, unfair, contradictory and illegal. I will attempt to set the record straight because I think such comments are undeserved.