

*Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971*

requirement, the door will be open to do so. In fact, this provision is rather short lived for a piece of legislation.

Why would there be any relationship between the variable entrance requirement and the trade deal? There is an element of the deal that has not been thoroughly exposed to public discussion, and I believe the public has a right to know about it.

We have heard the Prime Minister and the various Ministers in the House, on the hustings and up and down the streets of Portage and Main and the streets of Montreal, say that our social programs have remained untouched by this deal. In fact, because there is no guarantee that our social programs will be protected, our social programs are indeed very much up for grabs. Our unemployment insurance scheme is very much subject to a possible frontal assault by the Americans, and I will explain how that may occur.

When the Canadians decided that they wanted to get themselves into this deal with the Americans, one of their stated objectives was to guarantee access to the American market and another was to eliminate these trade irritants that are constantly cropping up, trade irritants like the one that cropped up when the Americans complained that our fishermen were unfairly subsidized because they received unemployment insurance benefits during the off season. Our Prime Minister promised that, in hammering out this deal, he would deal with the question of the American perception of what constitutes an unfair subsidy. However, he failed. The Americans and the Canadians could not come to any kind of reconciliation on what constitutes an unfair subsidy, so they agreed that they would hammer out this rather contentious and thorny issue over the next five to seven years.

● (1640)

We have a trade deal where Canada is giving away energy, and control over our own drug prices and investment. At the same time we have not managed to secure from the Americans once and for all a guarantee of what constitutes a subsidy.

**An Hon. Member:** Nonsense.

**Ms. Copps:** The Hon. Member says "nonsense". Yesterday I stood in this House with four glossy documents, part of the \$12.5 million propaganda package put out by the Government which, thank God, the CBC in Saskatchewan has been smart enough not to air across that province, and I defy any Member of this House to stand up and show me where it contains an explicit exemption for medicare, unemployment insurance—this is relevant.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I would like to bring to the attention of the Hon. Member, who has been here now for three years, that there is such a thing as relevancy. I know the Hon. Member is getting to the Bill and I am sure she will carry on.

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, it is very relevant. Over the next five to seven years we and the Americans have to sit down and negotiate exactly what constitutes an unfair subsidy. The Americans have already shown their cards in that they claimed that our fishermen were receiving unfair subsidy by receiving unemployment benefits in the off season. They would not receive those benefits if we did not have a variable entrance requirement. If you had the same regulations in St. John's, Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe, or Gander—Twillingate as you do in Toronto, then you would not be able to give fishermen unemployment insurance benefits. My premise in standing up to highlight the Government's failure to extend this legislation beyond one year is based on the fact that it wants to leave the door open to cave in to the Americans on the trade deal as it relates to unemployment insurance and it does not want to close off its options.

What if the Americans and Canadians sit down over the next five years and decide, for example, that pregnancy leave is an unfair subsidy? Millions of women in Canada of child-bearing age are eligible for paid leave while they have children. That is acknowledged and accepted by all Canadians. There was some reluctance on the Conservative side when the legislation was initially introduced, but it exists nonetheless. It is a statement we make as a society that we value our children, our families, and the women of this country. We feel they need time to nurture their children.

**Mr. Thacker:** Unless they are the unborn.

**Ms. Copps:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Thacker:** Unless they are the unborn.

**Ms. Copps:** The Hon. Member is getting on to another subject, which is important but not relevant to this particular discussion.

If the Canadian negotiators hold true to the form in which they gave away FIRA, drug prices and everything else before they even got to the negotiating table, we may find ourselves three, five or seven years from now bargaining away things like maternity benefits. We may bargain away unemployment insurance benefits for fishermen. We may accede to claims made by the Americans that medicare is an unfair subsidy.

**Mr. Mayer:** What a bunch of nonsense.

**Ms. Copps:** Now we are getting into the nitty-gritty of what this bad deal is about and why the Government refuses to extend it beyond one year.

**Mr. Mayer:** Why not blame the snowstorm on the agreement and get everything in there?

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry this Bill is being rammed through in order to provide a photo opportunity for the Prime Minister. However, I hope Canadians will start to look at exactly what this deal is going to mean for them.