

reasonable accuracy because of the variables. Surely, those variables were there a year and a half ago? We pointed them out many times to UIC officials. We said, "Your figures are wrong. You are talking about 5.3 per cent unemployment. That should be closer to 7 per cent, between 6½ per cent and 7 per cent." Now, suddenly they admit that they cannot forecast even two, three or four months ahead. They cannot tell us how much money they need.

As the hon. member for Yukon said, the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey) still seems to be the spokesman for the department. I had hoped that when the hon. member for Verdun rose this afternoon he would give us some of the answers, but again he went into the same old diatribe that we heard on second reading. He told us what a wonderful Unemployment Insurance Act we had, that it was the best in the world, and that if we did not pass this bill we would destroy that act thus, in effect, riding into power on the backs of the poor. But he did not once tell us why, when he was the minister who piloted the original bill through the House, he found it necessary to put a ceiling in the bill. Why did he think at that time that there should be a ceiling on the advances? He did not mention that at all.

He went on to say that the unemployed would not get their benefits if this bill did not pass. He told us how heartless we all were. But he did not tell us the reason we are in this bind now is the incompetence and bungling of his department and his officials. They were the ones who got us into this mess. All he said was, "We are in a mess; we want carte blanche to get out of it." When the House granted him an extension of time, I thought he would get into the meat of this bill. But no, he talked for ten minutes on Bill C-125, and was completely out of order. However, the Speaker let him go and we still got no information.

It may be true that members of government have painted themselves into a corner, that they have exhausted all their means of getting money into the Unemployment Insurance Commission. But this is their own fault. There is no point in suggesting that we are destroying the act. There are ample provisions in the act to meet such contingencies as we have here.

The UIC could have sought help from the government as early as last September, when it knew the indications were that it was going to be short of money before the end of the fiscal year. Testimony given to us in the committee shows that officials did go to the government with that information. That is the time when the government should have acted to bring in the type of bill we have today, but instead of asking for a complete removal of the ceiling it could have asked for a special appropriation; it could have introduced legislation asking parliament to provide enough money to run the commission until the end of March. Now, members of the government come crying, "If you don't pass this bill it will be your fault if the unemployed don't get their money."

**Mr. Andras:** Will the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Thomas (Moncton):** Certainly.

**Mr. Andras:** In view of the very words that the hon. member has just uttered, in view of the fact that since he

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said the government was informed in September, would he not admit that the House was dissolved at that stage? If so, how could the government bring legislation before the House when at that stage an election had been called?

**Mr. Thomas (Moncton):** I did not say the government should bring in legislation then. In any event, the House could have been recalled in a matter of days. Then, the very type of bill that the government has introduced now, could have been introduced, but asking for a specific amount rather than for the removal of the ceiling. It was government mismanagement that got us into this mess.

**Mr. Baldwin:** The government also knew about it in August. That is on the record.

**Mr. Reid:** You put it there, Jed.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I have got it right here.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Moncton has the floor.

**Mr. Thomas (Moncton):** I have until five o'clock, Mr. Speaker, so if they want to yap let them go to it.

This bill proposes to amend legislation that was duly passed by the House of Commons. I had hoped that after sitting for I don't know how many months in committee on Bill C-229, after hearing the minister and all the UIC officials tell us that that bill was the ultimate, that this was the most wonderful plan in the world and that everything was fine, we would not be faced, within a year and a half with having to make changes in it. But now the government suddenly comes back within a year and a half and says, "We were wrong; we want to make changes." I do not know what other changes the government has in mind, but now we must discuss this wonderful plan all over again.

Because the government is asking parliament to change legislation already passed, I think I should briefly review the reason the legislation was passed in the first place. Why was this ceiling put into the act originally? I refer to testimony given before the Labour, Manpower and Immigration Committee as recorded at page 24:26 of its proceedings No. 24, on May 19, 1971, when clause 137 of the bill, dealing with advances, was under consideration. At that time we had before us Mr. Douglas, General Legal Counsel for the Unemployment Insurance Commission. The vice-chairman of the committee called on Mr. Douglas to explain clause 137, and Mr. Douglas said:

Clause 137 authorizes the government to advance to the Consolidated Revenue Fund or the Unemployment Insurance Account in the Consolidated Revenue Fund sufficient to enable the Commission to pay benefits if the account is in a deficit position.

Then, he went on to say:

This would be in an interim position when actual costs were being determined and before the money had been collected or the government advance had actually been made.

This is another aspect on which we got a lot of misinformation in the House and in the committee. I have heard government members ask, as well as hon. members to my left, "What is all this fuss about advances? They are only advances. They are not costing the country anything. They will be paid back. What are you worrying about?"