

I should also like to congratulate the mover and second-er of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, the hon. members for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) and Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier). It was readily seen that a lot of work went into their deliberations and I should like to commend them for their ideas and the sincerity with which they presented them.

The Speech from the Throne may be impressive on paper in terms of dealing with inflation, setting up a national petroleum corporation, bringing about reasonable prices for farm and agricultural products, giving aid to small business, regional development and equality for women, the last I think of extreme importance. I have said on many occasions that within that particular group there is a skill bank from which there have not been sufficient withdrawals owing to discrimination and the lack of appreciation of what women can do, not primarily because they are women but because they have special skills and talents from which we can acquire a great deal. Perhaps in this area we as men have been lacking.

I point out that the Speech from the Throne is couched in generalities. It is calculated to impress the electorate but is meaningless until the fine print is disclosed. By this, I mean the legislation to follow the letter of intent, if I may put it in that way, which is the Speech from the Throne.

The legislation that is proposed may or may not be brought in. Even if it is brought in, it may then be allowed to die on the order paper. If my memory serves me well, last session the government introduced Bill C-125 which, for a number of reasons, was not allowed to be proceeded with. In this regard we lost what I believe was a very significant opportunity to delve into the Unemployment Insurance Act as well as to see to it that the people of Canada would be saved \$100 million.

A significant part of the speech is directed to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Let me quote this extract:

Amendments will be introduced to the Unemployment Insurance Act as a part of a comprehensive review of the plan undertaken in the light of the experience of the last few years.

As a result of the experience of the last few years my leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), has called unequivocally for an independent inquiry into the workings of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. You will readily see why, Mr. Speaker, after I have reviewed some of the history that followed the introduction of the Unemployment Insurance Act in 1961.

I bring to the attention of hon. members the pamphlet that was distributed by the then minister of labour responsible for the birth of the UIC. In that pamphlet is this paragraph:

We feel strongly that for our society today the proposed plan is a good one. This scheme, like all social programs, will have a certain life span.

It has been a well planned and scrutinized creation in a series of social development programs. It will allow all Canadians to experience the growing opportunities and rewards of our advancing society.

May I direct my colleagues to two portions of that quotation which are significant, namely, that "It has been a well planned and scrutinized creation", and "the proposed plan is a good one". Let me underline once again

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that in its present form this plan is not only one of the most expensive plans in the world but it is readily seen to have been neither well planned nor scrutinized. Two years of history have placed on record the prognostications and errors regarding the cost of the plan and the rate of unemployment. The 1971 revisions to Canada's unemployment insurance program were intended to alleviate some of the suffering brought about by high levels of unemployment. The Trudeau government's policies of economic slowdown were responsible for the drastic rise in unemployment which began in 1970 and has proceeded ever since. The former minister of labour is the latest Liberal cabinet minister to admit this.

Since taking these deliberate actions which resulted in high unemployment, the government has been consistently wrong in its forecasting both in regard to the level of unemployment in the country and the cost of paying unemployment insurance benefits. The unemployment insurance scheme as originally proposed by the then minister was to be a self-financing insurance scheme funded by employer and employee contributions when unemployment was below 4 per cent; above the 4 per cent level the government agreed to put up public money on the assumption that it is the government's fiscal and monetary policy that creates the level of unemployment in this country. I remind the House that the former minister of labour said when the bill introducing the scheme was first debated that this was the basis upon which the federal government would then supply the additional moneys, because he felt that unemployment was the creation of the government.

My party argued at that time that although we were in favour in principle of such a scheme—meaning a revamped unemployment insurance plan—it could turn all too easily into welfare that removed from Canadians the incentive to work. Of course, the Trudeau government argued that the 4 per cent level meant that the government had a vested interest in getting the unemployment figures down, a stance not borne out by the economic policies of the government, policies that have kept unemployment, seasonally adjusted, near or above 6 per cent for two years.

My main concern in this whole issue is twofold: first, the incredible cost of the system—\$2 billion for benefits plus administrative costs amounting to \$145 million; second, the much needed reduction in unemployment in Canada. It is for this reason that my party has proposed a two-edged policy to get Canada's economy moving again and to get Canadians back to work. This proposal would, among other things, eliminate the sales tax on all clothing, not just children's clothing, and eliminate the sales tax on building materials.

In addition, much of our party's policy has been directed to what we call the incentive society. All of our economic thrust has been to get Canada back to work, to increase productivity, and to increase substantially investment capital for small business through an incentive scheme. By working unemployment down to something like 4 per cent and then seeing if it can be lowered from there, tremendous amounts of government money now expended on unemployment insurance benefits could be freed for other social uses such as lowering the age for the old age pension. In addition, the billion dollar drag on Canada's