

*Control of Government Expenditures*

The same goes on in my area of Rouyn-Noranda. Small groups of separatists receive federal subsidies for local initiatives projects. They use that money to try to destroy Canada. You meet them in groups of ten, twelve, and they tell you: Ottawa is stupid enough to pay us, but we are not so stupid as to turn it down. And so they accept subsidies from Ottawa to work towards the destruction of Canada. The government has money to finance those projects but when it comes to the parochial complex of Nédélec, in Témiscamingue, it does not. They refuse a subsidy of \$52,000, while in a neighbouring parish, they subsidize a skidoo trail, part of which is built on a river! When the ice melts, the trail will disappear. Still, \$46,500 were granted for that project.

I have nothing against skidoo trails; I like the sport myself and do some skidooring. But, Mr. Speaker, projects of greater importance than skidoo trails have been truned down. If they were not, all would be well. Skidoo trails are fine indeed for week-end fun, but they are of secondary importance. In a logical system, that is the way things would be. But under our present system, skidoo trails have the priority over parish halls, and municipal or provincial improvements.

Money could be spent towards achieving better understanding between the various elements of Canada, so that all might work towards buttressing Canadian unity. But no, money is spent on projects that are worth very little.

So, Mr. Speaker, I distinctly blame the government for this situation. The opposition is quite right in saying it has been a stupid waste of taxpayers' money. That is what we are protesting against.

Now, let us turn to the area of unemployment insurance. To a question I put this afternoon, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Perrault) replied that there were 200 major offices throughout Canada. They have been centralized in the province of Quebec. For our region and the Hull region, the regional office is in Montreal. Anyone applying to the local Rouyn-Noranda office is referred to Montreal. Some people have received no benefits since October 25, a period of four months. We are entering the fifth month, with still no cheques forthcoming.

Yesterday, for instance, an applicant from Larder Lake, a village in the riding of my friend, the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), told me that he has been in touch with the Timmins office since October 25. The day before yesterday, he was notified that his case was still pending. They have been processing the case of this applicant for four months. He was advised to apply to a welfare office for assistance pending settlement of his case. Anyone applying to the provincial welfare office is told: "Your unemployment insurance benefits will be coming through." Yes, but when? In the meantime the applicant is required to undertake in writing to make his cheques over to the office when he receives them and he will thus obtain a small cash advance in the meantime. That is the game they are playing with the unemployed.

There is a still more serious case in my region, Quemont Mines which closed down, laying off 350 miners. These people, according to their working contract, had accumulated a fund of \$750 each, which they received when they were laid off. They applied to the Manpower

[Mr. Caouette.]

Centre, but they were told: Gentlemen, when you have spent your \$750, we will pay you unemployment insurance benefits. Now, the miner who has not found a job the day after his dismissal does not receive any unemployment insurance benefit. On the other hand, the one who has found one continues to receive an income. He is not told that he will not have to pay unemployment insurance as long as his \$750 are not spent. Unemployment insurance contributions are required from his first working day. After having paid unemployment insurance contributions during 20 years, those people are denied benefits, not because they are unemployed, but because they have accumulated \$750 during that period. That amount is considered as an extension of their wages.

I suggest that the Department of Labour is stealing from the workers of the Quemont and Noranda mines whose wages amounted to \$3,000 or \$3,500 at the time of their dismissal. This means that the Department of Labour is a department of thieves whose victims are the miners who have spent their lives toiling at 5,000 or 10,000 feet underground, have lost their job and are now receiving \$750 for 20 years of work. And then they are told: Gentlemen, you must spend your \$750 before you can get unemployment insurance benefits.

I brought this problem to the attention of the minister who told me: Officials have made a decision. What is the use of a minister who cannot make decisions? It is the officials who are going to decide in the case of the Qué-mont miners! These men have paid their unemployment insurance contributions, which means that it would come to the same if the government or the public servants said: Gentlemen, over your 25 years of work, you have saved \$4,000 or \$5,000; so we will have to check. Spend your \$5,000 and then, we will pay you unemployment insurance benefits.

• (1620)

As for the \$750, the government has collected them from those miners during 20 years. He has collected unemployment insurance contributions. And, when the time comes for benefits to be paid to them, they are told: Spend your \$750 allowance, and then we will start paying you unemployment insurance benefits. The Qué-mont miners began receiving benefits at the beginning of March when they had lost their jobs in August, in September or in October last year. And this is supposed to be normal!

Mr. Speaker, that is a waste of the taxpayers' money. It is more costly to hire someone like Lefebvre, a former Liberal organizer, at \$600 per week. Six hundred dollars per week! Money is available for that, but to help the unemployed, there isn't any.

For political patronage, money is available. To serve man, there is not. Appeals are made to the department, to the minister, to the deputy minister to solve some cases, because one cannot do so by oneself. And, suddenly, one finds that shameful waste is the rule in many fields, in several sectors of the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, no wonder provinces and municipalities are opposing Ottawa. Millions, billions of dollars are thrown away. When we ask the government to spend money for the people instead of taxing them and spending