

what it is supposed to do and whether it should, in fact, be insurance or whether it should be social assistance. If it is one, it has a certain path to tread and, if it is the other, then perhaps it should be travelling a different path. It is in this context, I think, that a number of people in this House, and others who are affected, were looking forward to a process in committee and in the House to see what could be done with the bill which was presented.

It was an interesting process in committee—one which I might say I was not used to—and one which clearly showed that the longer it went on the worse it got. I believe I am being fair in saying that. It began with an understanding that clause 2 of the bill would not affect a great number of people. But it really did not matter whether we agreed to it or not. It had already been passed by regulation and published in the *Canada Gazette*. This meant to the people I know and whom I represent that this was the way their life would be dealt with. To these people it meant that whatever the House decided did not matter, that whatever the people who administer the fund decided, that was the way it would be. It was, in my opinion, one of the most interesting comments on the responsibility and power of the people who are elected to government as opposed to those who serve in opposition.

Parenthetically I would say, of course, that the minister was personally embarrassed about the matter and did apologize. I might add also, in particular relationship to the longshoremen in Toronto, that he saw fit gracefully to allow his staff to assist in that regard when I raised the matter in the House.

During the committee hearings one thing became clear, especially to those who wished to observe it, that is, that the bill as presented is a bad bill because it has three specific effects which should not be countenanced either by the government or by any member of this House. First, the effect of the bill is to hurt those people who can least afford to be hurt. That is not a very good principle for a government to follow. It hurts, first of all, those who are most likely to be jobless. They are caught in a Catch 22 situation and have no choice. Second, it hurts those who have dependants—that's another word for children; they get less and their responsibility is greater. That, too, is also a bad principle for a government to defend. Third, it affects women, particularly working women with dependants.

Fourth, it affects seasonal workers. Fifth, it affects young people.

To do all these things in one bill might be considered quite an accomplishment, and one might ask how it can be done. Well, the way you do it, the way you chop 10 per cent out of benefits that may have been depended upon, the way in which you hurt 264,000 people is not by saying, "You are not going to get it because you abused the system;" it is by saying, "Here is 10 per cent by categories."

For us to accept that—because most of us are sensitive human beings—you would have to relate it to perhaps the oldest political move in the world. You would have to set up a scapegoat. You would need to paint people with a label in order that you can do things to them you would not otherwise

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do. That is called "scapegoating". So, you have to say that those people are going to get hurt because they are abusers and slackers. There is no other justification. After all, there is no one in this country who wishes to hurt those who are not abusers or those who are not slackers. Nobody would want to do that. So you would have to adopt the assumption that all of those people who will be hurt are abusers and slackers. Of course that is not true. In short, to justify hurting 264,000 Canadians the government had to combine an affliction on the guilty and on the innocent. They had, to borrow a word used by the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Rae), to be indiscriminate. Not to lose because you have abused—that is fair—but, rather, to lose because you fit into a statistical category. And that is not fair. That is the first reason why the bill ought not to be supported. It hurts all those categories of people who can least afford it and, more important, it does so by fixing a statistical category and determining that they ought not to receive the benefits they have so far enjoyed.

The second reason why the bill ought not to be supported is that it affects those regions of Canada which are already suffering. I need not remind the government or other hon. members of that because we have already heard very good speeches from the member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) and, of course, we heard the most excellent speech of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) today. What is interesting about this is that one has the feeling that six or eight months from now, or two years down the road if they were still the government, as they are sucking money out of the Atlantic provinces and Quebec now, what ministers over there will be doing is putting the money back and claiming to be helping out. It is not only hurting those regions which are already suffering, but, indeed, it is cynical—

An hon. Member: What about the two-tier system?

Mr. Crombie: The hon. member asks me about the two-tier system. Don't worry, I will get to that.

Mr. Speaker, the third reason, and one which I find to be closest to my heart since I know well the effect it will have, is that not only will it hurt people who can least afford it, not only will it hurt those regions and bear most heavily on those regions which are already hurting in this country, but that it will hurt provincial and municipal governments. With respect to this aspect I would like to make a couple of points.

Much has been said in respect of many bills about the importance of consultation between the central federal government and the provincial and hence the municipal governments. We often excoriate one another because we do not do it well enough. But usually such proposals are those which will be coming forward some time in the future. The effect of the bill before us will hurt them the day it goes into force in terms of money which has not been budgeted for, and I think we have to bear in mind what that means.

If you consider the statistics in terms of three categories—welfare, social services, and loss of revenue—you will find that British Columbia sees the impact of the measure as likely to