

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements

Member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) rose today to speak to the matter of unemployment insurance, and he said: The Minister of Employment and Immigration and the Prime Minister are wrong. The Hon. Member for Hochelaga—Maisonnette (Mr. Desrosiers) had the courage to rise. He doesn't follow the herd. He said: As far as unemployment insurance benefits and pension plans are concerned, my Prime Minister and the Minister of Employment and Immigration are wrong. That makes two of them. But is anyone going to rise in the House and say: Is the Prime Minister going to do something about equalization, justice for Quebec, the programs Quebec is claiming and the twenty-one dossiers that are pending?

Mr. Cadieux: Madam Speaker, I am somewhat hesitant to rise today because I would not want to give too much significance to what my colleague has just said. Still, if only for the record, I should like to indicate that the program to which my colleague referred, what he called the pre-retirement program, was the then Liberal Government Labour Adjustment Program which was slated to end in 1985. We did extend it for one year to find a better substitute, not something which would apply only to designated sectors but a program designed for all sectors with a view to protecting and helping all older workers, not just some of them. I will certainly have more to say about this once the program is ready for implementation, but I have no intention of promoting it before it is unveiled.

Mr. Malépart: Madam Speaker, at least I woke up one of them long enough for him to rise. Sad to say, as usual he is off on a tangent. True, the program was to end, but then all programs come to an end with a change in Government, there is nothing new in that. But if a program is working out well it should be extended. But can the Minister explain to me on the basis of what principle would his Government end a program and say: We have something better, but we do not know when it will be ready. Would any sensible person behave like that? I understand, the Minister says: I cannot go into the details of the program today. There are no details, the whole thing does not work. But the problem... If he had said: There is a good solution, here is the future program, this gives you an idea but in the meantime the programs designed for soft sectors or designated areas will continue to apply. On the other hand, he tells others: You are the most underprivileged and you are having problems in your regions, but I shall solve everything and help everyone throughout the country; however, I do not know when I can find the solution; here is how we are going to do it. I can understand that the Minister is ashamed about this and does not want to say anything. I would do the same in his place and I would remain silent. He is asking the provinces to share.

Madam Speaker, I am happy that one member opposite at least did speak up. We heard that he is Minister of Labour. No one knew it. I took it upon myself to make this fact known. However, I trust that he will now rise and tell us that such or such a program exists for the good of the community, but not like he has been doing to this point.

Mr. Cadieux: Madam Speaker, I am certainly not ashamed to ask the provinces to help older workers because I believe that all Governments should do something for these people. They should not discriminate and take care only of certain regions, because there are older workers in the Montreal region who were perhaps not specifically covered by the old program in the constituency of my hon. friend and who will be protected by the new program when it comes into effect.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, the workers are protected since these programs come into affect only after all other benefits, including unemployment insurance, are exhausted. If my hon. friend knows how to consult a calendar, he will realize that no one has ever lost any benefits because of this.

Mr. Malépart: Madam Speaker, I do not know whether the Hon. Member comes from a wealthy family, but he does not understand the effects of such a delay. When someone does not know what to expect after six months, he becomes worried and nervous. If the Hon. Member comes from a wealthy family and relied on his father to pay all the bills, I can understand that he would have no idea about what such a situation means. The Government is asking the provinces to share, it is reducing equalization entitlements and the amounts allocated to help older workers. If the Federal Government had shown some generosity, it would have said: We are allocating the same amount to help all the workers throughout the regions, but since we want to cover the entire country, we shall ask the provinces to put up an equal amount.

Instead, the Minister is cutting back the amounts allocated to older workers to reduce the deficit, to help people with bank deposits of over \$60,000 and to spend \$56 million on new uniforms which had to be thrown out later because they smelled bad. Then, the Minister asks the provinces to make up the difference. The older workers do not benefit; the Federal Government is simply helping its own friends.

Mr. Cadieux: Madam Speaker, I would not insist on depriving Hon. Members from their right to speak in other circumstances, but I think there is a limit to distorting facts. And I think the Hon. Member is quite aware that senior citizens should be helped, not scared. The program in question will be a better program if only, Madam Speaker, because it will apply to all senior workers rather than to only some of them. And again, if the Hon. Member could look at the amount of funding that has been provided for that program, and the extension of benefits under the previous program, he would realize that not only have we made no cuts, but we had the benefits increased.

• (1600)

Mr. Malépart: This is a darn good debate. We succeeded in waking him up for once, but he is still beside the track. The amounts of money he wants to provide to senior workers fall short of what they used to be. This is what he calls helping senior workers, taking money away from the poor in order to give it to the rich. I realize this is his leader's philosophy, but