

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

country in respect of this bill. It did not hear representation in respect of the programs that are going to have an effect on supplementary unemployment benefit packages which are part of collective agreements right across the country. I think the hon. member for Nickel Belt put it very well when he suggested that, if this were a financial bill, there would not have been an employer, an employers' group or an industry that would not have preoccupied members opposite. Simply because it is trade unions and the working people involved the government thinks it can lump them all into one group and say: "We have heard from the auto workers so we know what labour is going to say anyway, and we do not have to hear from anybody else". That is the kind of sympathy and understanding that organized labour gets from this government, and that is the kind of sympathy and understanding this government gives to the ordinary working men and women.

**An hon. Member:** And the Tories.

**Mr. Rae:** There is no point in even dealing with the remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, because the Tories really missed the boat in terms of what we have been saying about this bill. I think that hon. member said there were inequitable aspects of the bill that went too far even for the Conservative party, or words to that effect. The only thought that occurred to me, as it did to my colleague the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), was: What are the inequities that those people find acceptable? I would like to know what they are so we can put them forward.

I think it is a good time to look back at the debate of 1971, and this speaks directly to the motion and to clause 1, because the minister's authority and responsibility for administration of the act is really what is in question here. I would like to read into the record some words spoken by the then minister of labour, Mr. Mackasey; may he fly in peace, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Mackasey has gone on to his own reward. I think it was Lord Palmerston who once referred to the British civil service as the indoor relief department of the aristocracy. I think the Canadian civil service has become the indoor and outdoor relief department of the Liberal party. They have their own unemployment benefit scheme for superannuated politicians on that side. I do not suppose they could really be heard to blame other Canadians if they expect equal benefits from their government.

I want to just read into the record exactly what Mr. Mackasey said when the benefit increase went up. In 1971 there was a maximum of \$53. The government of the day brought in amendments that put it up to 66½ per cent and 75 per cent for people with dependants. Let me read into the record something Mr. Mackasey said as it appears at page 5039 of *Hansard* of April 19, 1971:

—the increase in benefits will postpone the day when people chronically unemployed must turn to welfare if they have no other sources of income. It can be said that the benefit structure has been developed by people who care about people. The argument that this will breed laziness, that it is catering to lazy people, is an argument that should not be raised in this chamber. But, Mr. Speaker, it is an argument that we hear too frequently. It is said that people are inherently lazy. That has not been my experience.

[Mr. Rae.]

Later in the same paragraph he said:

—I do believe that the overwhelming majority of Canadians in the work force would prefer a job rather than unemployment insurance or welfare, if they have that choice.

Mr. Mackasey then goes on to say—and for the benefit of those who want to look at this I would repeat that it is in *Hansard* for April 19, 1971, and I would suggest to hon. members opposite that they listen to this because they might learn something:

There have been the usual criticisms, Mr. Speaker, that unemployment insurance is welfare in disguise. It never has been that and it was never meant to be. We have attempted to close up the unintentional loopholes that previously permitted welfare connotations to creep into the plan. One of the weaknesses of the present structure is this: it has been difficult for people legitimately in the work force for the first time to become identified as legitimate members of the work force. After you leave university or high school or teacher's college and enter the work force for the first time, you must be part of the work force for two years and accumulate by a tortuous formula 30 contributions—hon. members know all the rest of it—as well as so many contributions in the last year before you are eligible for any type of assistance. We propose to reduce that period. We shall consider someone as attached to the work force if that person has as few as eight weeks of contributions. I say that because we are interested in the future of that worker and not in his past history. I think this will be of tremendous advantage to the Canadian worker. This is his fund.

Those are the words of the minister of labour who at that time was responsible for the administration of the Unemployment Insurance Act. He is the one who brought in the amendments in 1971. I think it is worth pausing a moment to reflect on those words, that this is the worker's fund, or the fund of the working person; it is his and her protection against unemployment.

We can see that the government's approach in this matter has been crystal clear from remarks made by the deputy minister in answer to questions, and from remarks by the minister in answer to questions. It is perfectly clear that this is no longer the workers' fund, but that this is the employers' fund. This fund is now regarded as the fund of the organized employer in Canada.

Keeping the record in mind, tell me at what point the Canadian Manufacturers' Association gave a damn about income maintenance. I am sorry for using that word, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is necessary in these circumstances. When did the Canadian Federation of Independent Businessmen worry itself sick about the fact that working men and women are not able to pay their mortgage payments or deal with the difficulties of economic life because of unemployment?

There was a revolution of ideas, Mr. Speaker, in the 1930s. That revolution and idea brought home to people that unemployment is not a voluntary thing. To use the words of the great social scientists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, "unemployment is a social disease, a disease of industry and the economy". It has many different causes and many different facets to it as an economic phenomenon, but it is not a voluntary act. We must never forget—as the government has, and of which the Tory party has had no knowledge at any time—that unemployment is something which happens to working men and women. When people are suddenly put on unemployment, it has a devastating effect on