

has lived here for ten years. He told me that he does not possess many skills, that the kinds of jobs he finds lead to frequent periods of unemployment lasting two, three or even four months. He explained that he is not lazy, not trying to abuse anyone, not trying to rip off the system. He is in good health and willing to work beyond age 65 or 70 at a labouring job. He does not want hand-outs. He said that he will not qualify for a pension in this country until he reaches the age of 70 or has been here ten years. He thinks this is unfair. Since he is forced to work, he thinks it is only democratic, fair and liberal—in the small “I” sense—that he should qualify for unemployment insurance. Otherwise, what will he do? He must go to the welfare office to collect welfare, which he does not want to do because it offends his philosophy, sense of decency and pride. People like this will be left unprotected. In 1974, I believe, 170,000 members of the work force were between the age of 65 and 69. They did not take advantage of the unemployment insurance fund. I understand that only a representative number of those people collected UIC benefits last year. Why should we discriminate against those people on the ground that we want to save money for the Unemployment Insurance Commission?

Hon. members fail to realize something else. Many of them say that we have in this country so many good, private contributory insurance plans with generous pay-out provisions that we can tighten the belt in other areas. Mr. Speaker, under 40 per cent of our people are covered by contributory pension plans. Many who do not have the advantage of such pension plans cannot afford to live on the old age pension or on the small pay-outs from the Canada Pension Plan. Therefore, they must work. If they must work, why cannot they be given the right available to all other Canadian workers to make contributions to the unemployment insurance plan and guard against the possibility of some day being laid off or losing their jobs?

The measure before the House discriminates against senior citizens, against those who laid the very foundations of this country and made it what it is. It will not bankrupt the government if it accepts the motion supported by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the genial hon. member for Hamilton West. If there is any meaning to those great Liberal phrases, “participatory democracy,” the “just society” and involving all the people, I think hon. members opposite should be prepared to stand in this House and demonstrate their individuality and liberalism by voting in favour of the motion before us which seeks to remove the discrimination against the elderly.

I look across the way and note the presence of the hon. member from Toronto, a great Liberal, the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson), the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Lee), and several others. I know if the whips did not crack their whips so hard, those hon. members opposite would be disposed to vote in favour of the motion brought forward by the two hon. members alluded to. Hon. members opposite know that the Unemployment Insurance Act as proposed by the government will discriminate against many of their constituents. I see the hon. member for Vancouver East scratching his head. I suggest hon. members opposite can show Canadians they are Liberals with guts if they support our motion calling for the amending of these clauses being proposed by the minister. Since I am confident that this will happen, I shall resume my seat and

#### *Unemployment Insurance Act*

expect hon. members to rise to indicate support for this sensible motion.

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I assured the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) privately that I would rise in this part of the debate on this motion. He publicly tried to goad me into rising, but I assure him that I wanted to rise. However, I intend to be brief.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Because there is so little to say.

**Mr. Andras:** I do not in any way deny the sensitivity, concern and emotionalism surrounding this issue. It was evident particularly, too, with one other amendment introduced concerning the dependency rate. Many speeches were made on the subject in the six-day debate on second reading and, indeed, in the many sittings of the committee, as well as on motions 1 and 2 and on the one now before us. I cannot produce for hon. members new versions of my thinking on the subject, but I think it important to put my views on record in this part of the debate.

I say, frankly, that this motion, and the necessity for the present adjustment and rationalization of an insurance plan and the dependency rate amendment gives me and my colleagues no joy. We believe it is our responsibility to do this, but it falls heavily on us and we take no joy in it. We think it is necessary, particularly in these days when we note that even in this fortunate country our resources are not infinite, are not totally unlimited, and that there is always the necessity to allocate properly, through proper channels.

The principle was established some time ago that there would be an age at which unemployment premiums would no longer be payable, nor benefits payable when there was an interruption of earnings on the part of an individual. In 1971 we established that age as 70, and the arguments made against any arbitrary—if you wish to call it that—limitation or threshold of age in the present debate could probably have been made against the decision reached in 1971. I note, from examining the record of debates at that time, that there was some discussion about making that age 65 years rather than 70. There was, however, concern that the Canada Pension Plan would not mature until 1976. I think it takes no great stretching of the imagination to suggest that the implication of those discussions was that this issue should be reviewed and discussed again, which is what is happening now.

We are proposing that 65 years should be the age at which some measures which now come into effect at age 70 should come into effect under Bill C-69. Indeed, for whatever reason, 65 years has now become the age at which programs provided by public institutions in Canada, provincial governments and other bodies, become effective. At that age there is, so to speak, a converging of support measures specially provided for people reaching the later stage of their lives.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Come, come.

**Mr. Andras:** We find, for example, that the Canada Pension Plan was designed for people in that age group—

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Come, come.