

have come to parliament and let us know earlier of the situation of the fund. He wondered whether perhaps he was not wrong in this regard.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) says that the government was wrong and stupid, but he goes along with them—he a man who cherishes the paramountcy of parliament.

An hon. Member: Come on.

Mr. Alexander: An hon. member in the rear has made a remark. I do not know what his problem is. He has not had a chance to speak since January 4. This is his maiden speech.

Mr. Rowland: Not quite.

Mr. Alexander: The reason that they give now for removing the ceiling is the constantly changing situation. There is one thing about it—

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: I have heard the hon. member speak before but I have not heard him speak off the cuff. He reads his typed speeches word for word. If there is one thing that he should learn to do it is to rise and take part in the debate as Members of Parliament should. I am not mentioning any names but I am referring to the hon. member in the red shirt over there. If he wants to rise on a question of privilege, let him stand up and the whole nation will know who I am referring to when I speak about the hon. member who reads his speeches in the House of Commons.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There are two members with red shirts over there.

Mr. Alexander: I am referring to the one with the loud mouth. Mr. Speaker, one would hope that this debate would be treated seriously and that we could score more serious points. But when you have buffoons interrupting you every five minutes it is not possible to have any continuity of thought.

Mr. Reid: You could not sustain it.

Mr. Alexander: I am still right on the road and I am speaking to the minister in charge of housing. We are waiting to hear from him. I am sure he has another panacea for the people of Canada. I know we will have to get involved with that matter sooner or later, and I hope he will not be smiling then as he is now; I hope he is deadly serious, because we are concerned about housing for low income people and I hope his bill will have some answers.

Mr. Basford: It has some of them.

Mr. Alexander: As I was saying, the reason which they give for removing the ceiling is based on constantly changing and unpredictable factors such as national and regional unemployment rates, constantly changing average earnings and the growth of the work force, in other words, the added participation in the work force, as well

Unemployment Insurance Act

as the length of the benefit period. All of those factors were known in 1971.

Since then we have solved these problems; we have reached our conclusions after deliberation on all those matters to which I have just referred. However, they were absolutely adamant that there should be a ceiling. What do they say now? They say that it does not matter what they did in 1971, they just do not have the competence to project. I do not know whether they are referring to the incompetence of the Department of National Revenue in their projections, the incompetence of their economic advisers, the incompetence of the UIC, the incompetence of the Department of Manpower and Immigration or the incompetence of the Department of Finance.

I cannot for the life of me understand why at one time they were able and willing to bring forth projected costs, but now in 1973 they say they cannot do it. Yet they expect us to buy this bill, this pig in a poke. We cannot do that. We would be irresponsible if we did. The government should tell us how much this is going to cost in 1973. If they could do it in 1971, they can do it in 1973. Not a soul throughout this great land of ours knows now, or will know until such time as this government wants them to know, how much this scheme will cost. This is irresponsibility at its worst.

I wish the government could take this matter seriously, because they have not discharged their responsibility. They stated that they are able to project costs for four months, but when it comes to projecting costs in order to satisfy the public with respect to their money they say they cannot do it. Not only do they say that they cannot do it, but they will not do it. The minister says that he cannot hazard a guess. No one is asking him to guess. We say to the government that they should put their economic advisers to work in the departments which I mentioned so that they can come up with a figure, because if they do not do so the Canadian public will not be satisfied that there is a necessity to remove the ceiling. I want the government to believe that. The public wishes to know what the scheme will cost.

We should know in fact whether the bill is worded in such a manner as to meet the administrative problems and the problems that will arise as a result of the financial situation, keeping in mind that control should be in the hands of parliament. We know that under section 133 the money comes from the premiums paid by the employer and the employee as well as from the appropriations. The minister can get more money at any time with the approval of parliament. Even though there is a ceiling under section 133(b), it is not as if there was no possibility of obtaining more money. Although you needed more money, you did not have to do anything as devious as asking for governor general's warrants rather than come to parliament. All the government had to do was to look at section 133(b) which reads:

any other amounts provided out of the consolidated revenue fund for any purpose related to unemployment insurance that is authorized by an appropriation by parliament and the administration of which falls to the commission.

There is a ceiling, and if the government needs more money they can get it from parliament. If parliament is not sitting, they can apply for governor general's warrants