

Finally, let me repeat that this question has been referred to the Forget Commission. The Minister has discussed it with the Chairman of the Commission, and although this does not fall directly within my ministerial responsibilities, I have had an opportunity to discuss this issue personally with the Commissioner as well. I know that he is sensitive to the issue and will consider it when making recommendations on the general approach to unemployment insurance and how it can be improved.

I suggest that the Minister has thoroughly informed Members of her approach concerning the recommendations which she will follow once they are given.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister is from Manitoba he will no doubt be familiar with the specific case of Rudolph Lange. This was, in fact, a test case in which the Board of Referees decided that the Government's action to interpret the use of pension and severance benefits as income was a violation of the law. The board ruled in favour of Mr. Lange. In the meantime, the Government has decided to appeal that decision and no money has been given to Mr. Lange. Why is the Government appealing that decision?

Second, does the Minister not believe that Mr. Lange should get his money in the interim, because it has been rightfully awarded to him in a favourable decision by the Board of Referees?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on the specific case but I can give the Hon. Member the general principle. The first step is that the Board of Referees has made a decision in favour of the person whom she has mentioned. That decision has been appealed and, being before the courts, is *sub judice*. I believe she recognizes that no decision will be rendered from here until all steps and decisions affecting both parties have been taken.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, it is with some sadness that I listened to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). I thought there would be a new era and a new atmosphere in this place as a result of our approval of the reform and new rules introduced by the committee chaired by the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). One of the changes is that Opposition Day motions such as this one could be voted on freely, without involving confidence in the Government. It was in that spirit that I brought this motion forward.

What we have heard is the Party line being laid down by the front benches of the Conservative caucus. I was prepared to be a little conciliatory, but it seems that they have drawn the line and it is down the middle of that aisle. I appeal to those Members opposite who have a conscience about this matter, and I want to ask the Minister specifically—

Mr. Mayer: What a windbag.

Mr. Rodriguez: Why don't you go back to sleep? Why don't you get up and make a speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please.

Supply

Mr. Mayer: Why don't you open your eyes and stop trying to suck and blow at the same time?

Mr. Skelly: When did you wake up?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I hope the Hon. Member has a question.

Mr. Rodriguez: When teachers and Armed Forces personnel were included in the Unemployment Insurance Act in 1971, the Minister recalled the debate which took place with teachers and others who did not want to be included in that Act. Yet the Government announced in November, 1984, that this change to the UI provisions would be made by regulation. The Act was changed by cabinet fiat with no opportunity for a Bill to go through the House with the proper consultative process that it would allow.

I believe that rather than changing the Act by one announcement in November, 1984, the Government should have referred the issue of pensions and the issue of severance and holiday pay to the Forget Commission which was set up in the spring of 1985. Canadians could have had an input into that commission, a report could have been made to the Government and the appropriate changes could take place. I suggest that this would be the proper way to review the program. Does the Minister agree that this would be the proper procedure and, if so, will his colleagues support the motion before the House today?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt talks about a new spirit. I appreciate his recognition of that new spirit and I am sure that his response was given in that new spirit as well.

The Government made a decision and announced it through legitimate means. The Government has both the right and responsibility to make those changes, and they were announced on three separate occasions as well as in response to innumerable questions in the House. The Hon. Member asked a number of those questions.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration and I have given the Hon. Member the assurance that the Forget Commission has been given every opportunity to examine this part of the Act as well as others.

The decision of the Government stands and, as a member of the Government, I have reiterated it for him today.

I appreciate the Hon. Member's motion and his intent, but I am saying to him that the decision of the Government stands until the Forget Commission comes back with its report.

● (1630)

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Minister say in his address that EPF funding has not been cut. In the *Charlottetown Guardian* on March 10, 1986, the Minister of Health and Social Services of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Fogarty, is quoted as saying that the Province of Prince Edward Island will get \$11 million less than it originally anticipated over the next five years under the EPF formula.