

I know that this minister has always been fair and objective with this sort of thing. When I hear the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte suggest that the appropriation of funds under Canada Works has been politically manipulated by this government, all I can say is that this is complete nonsense. I will make sure that I use parliamentary terms when I speak of him, but let me say that for a Tory member like the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte to suggest this sort of thing, when he knows that the appropriation of funds is based on an arithmetical formula, is not to have the courage to speak out. That is what the hon. member is doing, to use parliamentary terms; he does not have the courage to speak the truth. For a Tory member from New Brunswick to talk to me—I am also from New Brunswick and I know how the Tory government operates in that province—and suggest that people would manipulate funds strictly on an electoral or political basis is sheer hypocrisy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Breau: When this government appropriates funds on programs which affect people, it does not ever manipulate them politically, and the hon. member knows that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Come on.

Mr. Breau: Hon. members might say "oh, oh!", but I challenge the hon. member to rise and prove what he said, to prove that any program administered by this government which affects people directly has been manipulated politically. I challenge any member to do that.

Mr. McGrath: I am worried about your throat.

Mr. Breau: My throat is good enough to deal with the hon. member for St. John's East; he does not have to worry about it. Whenever I hear this kind of hypocrisy in the House, I can always find enough strength to speak.

Mr. Peters: What about your medication?

Mr. Breau: To suggest this sort of thing is not to have the courage to speak the truth. I do not like this bill particularly.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Breau: It is not my invention. I did not ask for the bill. But I will support it because—

Miss MacDonald: Because you are a Grit.

Mr. Breau: I heard the hon. member for South Shore (Mr. Crouse) utter something. If he likes to put it on the record I will answer him, but I will not force him to do so. He knows I do not support anything.

Mr. Peters: Conflict of interest.

Unemployment Insurance Act

Mr. Breau: This bill has to be seen in the context of an exercise by the government to moderate the rate of growth of deficits in Canada. It must be seen as an exercise by the government to make sure we do not spend the GNP at too high a rate at any particular time. The deficits in Canada are not out of proportion in comparison with deficits in other industrialized countries, but the rate of growth of these deficits has been too rapid in too short a time.

The hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Rae) should not get too excited because I understand his party's position. It is very clear. They say one should not worry too much about the rate of growth of deficits, and they need not be responsible for whatever they ask for. I would love to be in that position, I would love to be able to ask for anything and to propose anything that sounds good, that is good and just. I happen to be responsible and I happen to be a member of a party which wants to do things for people, which wants to set up good programs for people. But we must answer to the House of Commons and to the public for the amount of money that is spent in Canada.

Also we must answer to the public for the amount of money that must be borrowed abroad or elsewhere for the country. That is why in the months of August and September the government has looked at some programs to see if they could not be changed so that some funds could be liberated to increase child benefits through a tax credit scheme; to increase old age security supplements and to change the spouse's allowance program to provide for a benefit of six months when the spouse dies; and, most important of all, to provide funds for manpower training, job creation and economic development. That is the objective of the so-called August and September exercise.

It is in the context that I support this bill. When the minister first spoke about putting forward this bill, there were some things in it that I could not support and I told him about them. Many of us here do not need a filibuster in the House. We do not need to spend four or five debates discussing two or three amendments and making political speeches to make a point. We sat down with the minister and we discussed these matters with him. He has been very forthcoming and very flexible and he drastically changed his proposals from when they were first announced in September when he presented the bill in the House. I want to thank the minister publicly for having done that because, first of all, the most drastic proposals in September were those with regard to repeaters. He has changed those provisions so that the maximum penalty for repeaters would be six weeks.

● (1242)

The minister went even further and used the best information available, the economic zones provided by Statistics Canada. These zones were not drawn up by the bill; they were drawn up prior to the bill by order in council. Perhaps they are not the best zones, but the minister went further. He looked at the 48 economic regions and indicated that they happen to be in areas where people work and are subjected to living in