

Unemployment Insurance Act

family, he would be making the same contribution to this plan as the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Faour) who is single and has no family, but if they were laid off, he would only get 50 per cent while the hon. member for Vegreville would get 66⅓ per cent, yet both would pay the same price for a gallon of gas and the same taxes to the Newfoundland government.

I do not see how the so-called progressive Tories on the front bench can claim that this is equity. I wanted to hear them defend the Santa Claus leader of the opposition. In summary, what he is saying to the Canadian people is that someone who makes the minimum wage can live on \$50 a week, or \$2,600 a year. This has been said loud and clear, Mr. Speaker. He is the \$50 Santa Claus. That is damned pathetic in a country as wealthy as Canada, Mr. Speaker. It is damned, damned pathetic, indeed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that I always enjoy speaking in this place or listening to hon. members speak, but I did enjoy the performance of the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom). I do not think I have ever seen him speak with such vehemence. But vehemence relates to many things and I can understand his frustration. I suppose anyone would be frustrated who was playing second banana to the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez).

An hon. Member: That is an interesting comment in the House of Commons.

Mr. Paproski: Will you tell those Liberals to be quiet?

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I know the government is embarrassed and exercised with this, but if hon. members could suppress their frustrations a little longer we will get to the unpleasant aspect of facing the guillotine in all these report stage amendments.

• (2132)

The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville was obviously performing as a double duty man tonight, speaking in part for his party, although one felt he was speaking primarily for the government side. I do not think the government enjoyed any speech as much as the one made by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville. Quite frankly, I kept pinching myself to find out if I had fallen asleep and then awakened in a new parliament where we were the government, and the member for Yorkton-Melville was assuming his normal role in the opposition. He is intelligent enough to know he will never carry the responsibility of being on the government side in this House. Therefore, he must ventilate his frustrations from time to time, and this he has done very well, so much so that the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), who has just interrupted, had to remind him at one point to include also the Liberals in his criticism as he fired off salvo after salvo in our direction.

[Mr. Nystrom.]

I find it passing strange that the party this member represents which was so anxious to move and to discuss two dozen of the report stage amendments spent no time at all dealing with any of these supposedly important amendments but focused entirely on one of ours—

Mr. Benjamin: Sit down. Let's go to one of yours.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I will, if you give me time. If my hon. friends to the left could restrain themselves, I simply say that the one amendment the member talked about is not perfect.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): It is not perfect, but it is a darn sight better than what the minister is trying to ram through this parliament tonight.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I suppose, in the nature of the speech that was given, the member wanted to ignore altogether that this particular amendment happened to be supported by his premier, Mr. Blakeney of Saskatchewan, as well as all the other premiers. The government members are great for heckling from the benches but they sort of laid off having their own speakers and are deputizing some of my friends to the left in the NDP.

My time is limited, Mr. Speaker, and I want to deal with the more serious aspects of the speech—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): —having passed off from the fun and games and the kind of light diversion supplied by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville.

The minister knows, and I see some of my Atlantic friends, at least one or two of them on the other side, who know as well that there is no particular item or government initiative which has greater potential for damage at the present time for the economy of the Atlantic region than the measure we are considering tonight.

An hon. Member: Ah!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) or wherever it is, says "ah!" But he better do his homework and look at the figures. I have been expecting for some time to hear the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard) speak up in this debate. We know only too well that the economic impact of unemployment insurance in the Atlantic provinces is of major importance.

I am glad to see the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson) is here in the House tonight because he occupied, for a period of time, the important responsibility of being Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. If the minister had an opportunity to speak in this debate, I am sure he would confirm that the ratio in the 1970s between the amount