

Unemployment Insurance Act

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman—

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member knows what I was going to say.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes; and you, Mr. Chairman, know perfectly well why I was referring to this record of great achievement. What the Minister of Labour, demonstrating an unusual lack of self-discipline not characteristic of the hon. gentleman, failed to point out was that unlike the present instance, the increased contributions then were accompanied by a change in the pattern of benefits.

Mr. Starr: No.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My hon. friend says no. That is his argument, which is of course a very—

Mr. Starr: It was inclusion of seasonal workers.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Is that a benefit? Does my hon. friend think the former government was doing something worth while when it gave assistance to those workers in our country who had exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits and who were without any means of livelihood? Is that not something by way of benefit? The labour organizations of this country did not complain about those amendments.

Mr. Starr: This government has done more in that respect.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My hon. friend says this government has done more. All I can say is that the little record of achievement of this government in the field of social welfare is such that if I were the minister of labour I would never make reference to it.

Mr. Starr: When you consider the record over 22 years it is not much.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not mind these interruptions. They simply reveal a troubled conscience in this particular which is giving evidence of its disturbed state.

The real fact about this matter is this. Whether or not the argument of the hon. member is correct with regard to the past—and it is not—the point is, what about this present situation? I would ask this of the Minister of Labour, and also of the member for Cape Breton South, who was pretty severe with me a few moments ago but whose friendship I think I enjoy; now and then in the committee he came to my assistance notwithstanding his indictment a few moments ago. I would like to ask him does he not think that we on this side are not altogether unjustified in our condemnation of this bill?

We are not alone in that view; we have hon. gentlemen who sit immediately to the

left of Mr. Chairman who joined very vigorously with us in this matter. But is it unfair to suggest that where there are going to be benefits of \$20 million or \$25 million at the most under this bill, and where there are going to be further impositions by way of additional contributions of between \$75 million and \$80 million on the workers and employers of this country, this is a very unfair and unjust measure to put before the house?

The total revenues to be derived as a result of these amendments, including the \$16 million from the government of Canada, will be \$100 million. The total benefits will not exceed a quarter of that amount. In the face of—

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): You are saying crazy things.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The Minister of Finance says “crazy things”, but I can only say to him that when he makes that kind of observation he reveals what has been apparent since yesterday, and that is that he does not know anything about this bill at all. I say to the Minister of Finance, it was his bond conversion plan and the failure of this government to do something about unemployment which caused a drain on the unemployment insurance fund and forced this government into a situation where it had to give careful consideration to arriving at methods for replenishing the fund in order to have enough money on hand to pay maintenance grants for the unemployed of this country next fall and next year.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): That is untrue in every particular.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Because the Minister of Finance accepts responsibility in this particular situation by his current interventions, this government stands indicted by this bill, as it stands indicted by no other measure so effectively, in view of its complete disregard for the rights of labour, for the rights of the employers, and in view of the complete disregard of responsibility by the Minister of Finance in the presentation of his budget. This government stands indicted by every national organization which appeared before this committee, because by this measure the government, this anaemic government, settles on the workers of our country the responsibility which belongs to hon. gentlemen opposite.

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Chairman, it is not my intention at this time to make long remarks on this first clause of Bill C-43, but since this bill has been introduced in committee a number of members on the government side, and almost everyone from the