

Interim Supply

the unemployed today not in just as much need as they were two years ago, and in most cases in more need because of the state of their unemployment insurance and other factors?

I ask the minister whether this decision has been made. Have the government decided to have another deficit, to do a great deal more borrowing, as the Prime Minister told the public they would do if the circumstances were the same? Have they decided that or have they not? Surely no question could be more related to the subject before us right now than that question and I think the Prime Minister ought to answer it. I think the public of Canada deserves an answer. When the Prime Minister of this country uses words like that, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that the public are entitled to know whether they mean anything or whether they are like his pledge before the election in 1958, that no one would suffer from unemployment, and are just words.

Mr. Robichaud: In rising to say a few words on the motion now before the committee, I feel that I do not have to beg for the generosity of the committee as was suggested a few moments ago by the Minister of Finance. The few remarks I wish to make at this time are based on a principle which is the basis of English parliamentary law. As Bourinot so aptly stated:

The principles...are: "to protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every member to express his opinion within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time;—

My remarks will be brief, Mr. Chairman, but I wish at this time to question the administration of the unemployment insurance commission. Decisions which are being rendered lately by the unemployment insurance commission are unjust and are creating discriminations in certain cases. It is true that the Minister of Labour may be worried by the present standing of the unemployment insurance fund. When they took power they were left with a fund of over \$900 million and as at February 29 it was down to \$408 million. Having regard to the number of unemployed now receiving unemployment insurance benefits, as at March 31—that is a week from now—the unemployment insurance fund will be down to a figure in the vicinity of \$350 million.

I wonder whether it is because of the unfavourable conditions of the unemployment insurance fund that certain decisions, which to me are too severe, are being enforced by the commission. I wish to give as an example the decision which was rendered in the

case of a logger in Madawaska county who was refused unemployment insurance benefits because he could not afford to buy a \$200 chain saw. It is true that the minister, in a letter I received from him under date of March 15, says that the facts are that the logger in question had worked six and a half months at the rate of salary of \$15 per day and was unemployed only three days prior to the offer of employment and that it did not seem to justify his action in not keeping his equipment in good shape, the necessary tools of his trade in working order. But what the minister failed to see was that in order to earn \$15, this man was obliged to work from 12 hours to 14 hours a day; that he was obliged to cut four cords of pulpwood at \$3.50 a cord; that out of the \$15 he was obliged to pay \$1.50 for board and the acknowledged rate of \$1 a cord for the operation and maintenance of his chain saw. This father of a large family was left with less than \$8 net salary per day.

When this man was laid off late in November, he immediately went to the unemployment insurance commission and asked for more work. He was assigned to a certain lumber camp. When he went to that camp on December 3, they insisted that he had to secure for himself a chain saw which would have cost him \$200. How can a logger afford to spend \$200 to purchase a chain saw when he was guaranteed, at the most, only five weeks to six weeks of employment? It was then early in December. Notwithstanding all those facts, the unemployment insurance commission decided that he would not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits.

I feel that this is pure discrimination and injustice with respect to loggers. I have here the submission to the board of referees when this man reported to the unemployment insurance office. He went a distance of 40 miles to the lumber camp where he was assigned work and on his arrival, when he found out that he had to secure for himself equipment costing \$200, he decided that he just could not afford to do it when he was guaranteed only a few weeks' work.

I hope it is not because the unemployment insurance fund is down to a figure under \$400 million that such decisions are arrived at by the commission. If we need a bill of rights in this country, I think we definitely need it to protect the labour class of this country when such decisions are taken.

I also want to bring to the attention of the minister the policy of the unemployment insurance commission relating to family employment or the insurability of relatives. I have had brought to my attention some 30 to 40 cases of this type since the first of the year.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]