We on this side of the House did agree to a one-day debate with regard to this legislation. That can be seen as a measure of our desire to have the positive items in this legislation receive approval. But clearly there are matters of great concern to people in the country that are not yet addressed in the legislation, and that is why we drafted amendments, one of which is in regard to fishermen. Since the Government introduced amendments to its own legislation today, we feel that it is only reasonable that we should be able to bring forward amendments at the same time, particularly in light of the fact that we are co-operating with the Government to see that this legislation is dealt with in an expeditious fashion.

It surprises me, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) is co-operating with the Liberals in order to deny us this opportunity to introduce amendments which would address the concerns of fishermen in a more adequate way than in the present legislation. This leaves me with the impression that the Liberals and the Conservatives have formed a coalition to block the NDP from presenting the real concerns of fishermen in any adequate fashion. I do not want to dwell on that for too long, Mr. Speaker, because my colleague, the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River, will go into that issue in some detail.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I must rise on a point of order to seek your assistance. The Hon. Member has no right to impute motives. I indicated to the Hon. Member very clearly why I felt that the procedure he was suggesting was unacceptable, and that was because we had agreed to a one-day debate. That does not mean that I support everything the Government does and that I believe this is as far as the Government can go. I had already indicated in my speech that we should be reopening the Act. I know that you are about to intervene, Mr. Speaker, and say that this is debate, but the Hon. Member has no right to impute these kinds of motives to me. He made an undertaking, he has abdicated that undertaking and we intend to hold him to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Hon. Member for St. John's East is quite correct in presuming that the Chair will refer to his point as debate. Nevertheless, it is always dangerous for the House to be put in a position where an Hon. Member would impute motives to another Hon. Member. Therefore I would caution all Hon. Members to be very careful in that respect.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I do intend to respect the rules, but I must point out as well as a matter of courtesy that I certainly did not interrupt the speech of the Hon. Member for St. John's East, and I find it incredible that he would interrupt my speech. We have made a commitment to co-operate and allow passage of this legislation in one day and we intend to stand by that commitment.

However, as stated quite clearly by the NDP House Leader, we certainly made no commitment that we would not seek leave of the House to introduce amendments. I would be glad to indicate that the purpose of those amendments is to give some voice to the current concerns of fishermen. I do not intend to impute motives, Mr. Speaker, but I would say that the fishermen who have contacted us have certainly asked us to bring their concerns to the attention of the House.

They would appreciate it if the Hon. Member for St. John's East and the whole Tory caucus would assist us by getting these amendments on the floor of the House. They would appreciate it if the Government would do the same thing, Mr. Speaker. We would appreciate their co-operation in introducing the amendment with regard to fishermen so that the rights of fishermen to unemployment insurance without discrimination could be more adequately dealt with by the legislation before us today. We have co-operated with the Government in allowing the legislation to go through in one day and we have no intention of backing away from that. We do not need the Conservative Party to hold us to our commitments; we make our commitments and we live by them.

• (1210)

This legislation not only deals with the variable entrance requirement and with the Silk case but also the Anderson case. This concerns the capacity of teachers to collect unemployment insurance in the summer months when they are paid on a 12-month basis. The Government is introducing amendments to deal with that situation and that is good.

The other matter that is dealt with by the legislation is maternity leave. We are dealing with the legislation and putting it through in one day because there are positive things in it that remove discrimination that affects women and maternity leave. I will come back to that point more fully later.

That is roughly what the Bill covers, but one of the things it fails to address in an adequate way is employment and income security for people.

At an earlier time unemployment insurance benefits were paid out of general revenues to a greater extent than they are today because the Government had a commitment to provide a job for every Canadian. When the rate of unemployment went above a certain level, rather than benefits coming out of the premiums paid by businesses and workers, instead they came out of general revenues. The Government recognized it had a responsibility to provide an economic climate and a job for everyone. When unemployment increased, the general revenues of the Government would kick money into the Unemployment Insurance Fund to pay for the increased benefits.

It is important that we return to that manner of financing unemployment insurance for a couple of reasons. The first is that when the cost of unemployment insurance comes out of general revenues it is a reminder to the Government that it has to create jobs for people. Second, when the cost of unemployment insurance comes out of general revenues, then it is shared on a more equitable and broad tax base. Premiums for unemployment insurance are regressive and inequitable because the poor pay more in premiums than the general taxation system pays.

I raise the question of premiums because there was an increase in premiums of some 54 per cent last October and