

*Employment and Immigration*

have taken on the various amendments before the House. I would like to say at the outset that unlike the actions of the hon. member for Hamilton West—who read through the various amendments and rejected those proposed by the NDP out of hand just for the very reason, it seemed, that they were NDP amendments—we are going to support his motion No. 18 because we looked at the motion and asked whether it contains any merit, and I think the idea of an annual review of this government's ineptitude is quite worth while.

● (2040)

I am rather disappointed in my friend, the hon. member for Hamilton West. As an experienced member he should know by now that any program of job creation or the like proposed by the Liberals is no more than tokenism. I was surprised at his faith in the job creation and work training programs. He admitted these have not worked in other jurisdictions and he was skeptical about their effects, yet he was willing to give them a year to see how they worked.

This party rejects the idea of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) using unemployment insurance funds for these programs, not because we are against job creation per se but because we are against stealing funds from the unemployed for them. If the government is serious about creating jobs it should make a budgetary commitment to do so, and not tinker with money that should go to support people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

The minister and his colleagues will not come to grips with the fact of one million unemployed by challenging the existing structure of our economy and our reliance on the private sector to create jobs. That just does not work because of the way the economy is structured. Instead of making that fundamental kind of reorganization and commitment to new industry, and hence new jobs, it prefers to attack unemployment. This bill will apparently save money, but by throwing some 330,000 unemployed people off the unemployment rolls. The savings will be used on make-work projects and job training.

The first reason we objected to this approach is that those 330,000 people will be excluded from benefits under the job creation and work-sharing programs. The money saved by taking people off unemployment insurance will go toward creating jobs for others. Only those who are still receiving benefits will qualify under this make-work project.

The other reason we oppose the amendment to Clause 41 is that if people on unemployment insurance accept jobs on these federal government work projects they will be paid out of UIC funds. It should be remembered that work on such projects will not be considered as employment and will not make people eligible for future UIC benefits. It is tokenism. Anyone who joins in the scheme knows that it is a phony make-work scheme; it is not real employment. He knows it is not taken seriously by the government and that he will never qualify for benefits on such schemes. It is a very cheap way for the government to get work done.

Surely it is far better to have people sit idly by collecting unemployment insurance than to move into this phony kind of

[Mr. Symes.]

busy work or job-creation scheme. The government should get going and create jobs instead of tinkering with the unemployment insurance scheme and making it look as if it was doing something creative. It is not fooling members of this House. It is not fooling the unemployed. A previous minister of manpower and immigration, Jean Marchand, who is now in the other place, in the course of a debate in this House in 1966 said:

The hon. member made a suggestion with which I basically disagree when he said we should try to find part-time work for those who draw unemployment insurance.

Unemployment insurance is a type of insurance. The people who get unemployment insurance are not living on public charity. If we give start to competition between workers and those who are on unemployment insurance, I fear we will create an unbearable situation. Those people start working for lower salaries and will finally end up competing with regular workers. To my mind we must instead find regular employment for the people on unemployment insurance, full-time jobs that will afford them a livelihood. We must not allow them to compete against the working class.

The former minister recognized the hazards of the slippery path upon which the present minister is about to embark. This kind of program will neither be productive for the unemployed, for those who are already employed nor, indeed, for employers. For these reasons we object to this scheme, not as the hon. member for Hamilton West implied, because we are against job creation per se.

The other thing I object to is that the money saved from throwing people off the unemployment insurance rolls will be available for on-the-job training of people eligible for UIC. When we look at the budgets for the department from 1970-71 to 1974-75 we see that it has spent up to 75 per cent of its budget on training. Where are those people who have been trained? Where are the jobs?

● (2050)

We retrain people, keep them off the streets, supposedly off the unemployment rolls, to what end? There are no jobs for them. People who know anything about the program concede that after the training is finished the trainees will not find jobs, because there are none. That is why we say the program is phony and the minister's proposed changes meaningless, for the jobs are not out there, in the first place. Taking money out of unemployment insurance and putting it into training is ridiculous. My colleague from Nickel Belt has told the House of the many hairdressers and clerks trained under the retraining program for non-existent jobs. I repeat, the minister's changes are meaningless, phony, will harm the work ethic in this country, and heap indignities on the unemployed.

In the few minutes remaining may I speak on motion No. 14, standing in my name? The government wants to pay extended benefits only to those who have worked 26 weeks or more, and the minimum requirements in this regard are being extended. Those lucky enough to work 20 weeks in areas of high unemployment will, under existing formulas, also be eligible for extended benefits. The government realizes how difficult it is to find work in high unemployment areas and, accordingly, will allow the unemployed to collect benefits for a longer period. But the government's new proposals for cutting back extended benefits will create hardships in Atlantic