

in this country that are sitting idle. I have sat in this House and heard the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) tell us, "All is well. We won't have rationing. Those megaprojects, the security of oil from the oil sands, will occur. Price is not important."

That is absolute nonsense. That industry is worldwide. It is an industry unlike any other with which I am familiar. That is because the three major elements of that industry are mobile. The people are mobile and can go anywhere in the world. The drilling rigs are designed to be mobile so that they can work in muskeg and the oceans, and therefore can go anywhere in the world.

In the absence of a reasonable policy affecting that industry, I suggest to this House that that industry will for the most part leave this country. When it does, our dependence on unstable foreign sources of supply will increase. Our balance of payments will be in a more difficult position. The value of our currency will continue to fall and our unemployment rates will rise.

Anybody who ignores the reality of what I have just stated is inviting this country on a fairly long road toward increasing disaster. A country with the potential of the people and the resources that we have which heads toward a disaster is something that no thinking Canadian should tolerate. There is no logical reason for it. It is a consequence of political expediency dominating rational thought and rational action. As long as I am a member of this House and this party exists in this House, we will continue to fight to reduce the incidence of political expediency and increase the incidence of rational thought. The problems of this country require us to do no less.

As I sat here today, I looked at the unemployment insurance program. On the basis of a previous press release I knew the minister would stand in this House and tell us that the unemployment insurance fund would be in surplus and, therefore, premiums did not have to be increased. The minister used the rhetoric and said that he believes in the insurance principle. Well, one of the principles of an insurance fund that is really dominant, whether we are talking about house insurance or car insurance, is that we pay in premiums today because we know that somewhere down the road there will be a rainy day. That is what insurance is for, protection against that rainy day.

Under our government, that fund was left in surplus. However, it is a tiny surplus. The kind of unemployment rates which are projected by the private forecasters in this country suggest that that surplus will not last for any extended period of time. I thought, what will be the policy response of members opposite when that fund runs dry, when the claims are greater than the money that is in there to pay the claims? What will they do?

A rational man would say there would be three options. First, we could increase the premiums. The workers would pay and that would be a penalty on the workers. Second, we could decrease the benefits, and that is a penalty which the unemployed would have to suffer. Third, we could borrow more money. Nobody that you can touch or feel has to pay, but the

Unemployment Insurance Act

whole society has to pay through increased interest rates and long-term debt which our children will have to pay.

When that happens, with that government opposite, will there be any question in the mind of any Canadian as to the option they are likely to prefer? None whatsoever. Clearly and consistently the option taken by that side of the House is to increase borrowing, not to help Canadians realize the relationship between costs and benefits, but simply to increase borrowing to hide, to take the problem of today and transfer it to the generation of tomorrow instead of facing up to it now. That is what will happen.

I wonder if the minister will consider in his task force and review inviting dialogue on what will be the proper policy response when and if the economic policies of his government cause the unemployment rolls to grow so much that the fund is out of balance. Certainly members on this side would like to make suggestions for positive economic change and to participate in that kind of dialogue.

I would like to raise just a few other matters for the minister's consideration. He told us today that the terms of reference for that task force are not complete. Hopefully the debate on Bill C-3 and the second reading stage will allow the minister to open his ears wide and listen to the positive suggestions as they come from any side of the House, and perhaps utilize some of them in the drafting of those terms of reference.

We support the need for a complete review of the unemployment insurance fund. One of the items which should be addressed in terms of its philosophy is whether the existence of such a fund and one's participation in it is a right or a privilege. From that decision flows a number of others, but it is fundamental. There must be some sense of philosophical underpinning to a piece of social legislation of this importance. Is the existence of this fund and this program a right or a privilege?

The minister has already indicated, and we support the fact, that there should be a review of the regulations as they affect those who voluntarily quit a job or whose job is terminated because of misconduct. I would like to think that some day the minister might make the data which he has on that issue available to the members of this House so that we can study it as well as he, and perhaps sometimes take a different interpretation of that data.

As I understand some of the rumours which float around, there is some indication that those who voluntarily quit or are dismissed for misconduct draw benefits for longer periods of time on average than those whose jobs are terminated due to other factors. If that is true and if the data supports that, we would like to know. If the data does not support it, we would like to know that also. The minister has such data in his possession, and I think it is time that reports of that nature were tabled in the House of Commons so that all Canadians, including hon. members on this side of the House, could have access to such data.