

*Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971*

well, Donald Macdonald recommended changes to the unemployment insurance program which were similar to what the Forget Commission came down with.

**Mr. Keeper:** Is he a Conservative?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I do not know what he is now. God only knows. However, he was in fact a supporter of the Forget Commission report. He wanted it put into effect.

Now the Government is responding to what we have been saying or what we have been suggesting was common sense. Instead of penalizing the poor, instead of picking on the hinterland, instead of punishing the unemployed because there are not enough jobs in their areas, the Government should spend the time and effort to devise employment strategies in the regions. These strategies can only come about—and we have been saying it to this Government and to the previous Government—when a Government is an active Government. This can only come about when a Government involves itself in planning the strategy and in being part of the implementation of the strategy.

One of our fears in respect of the free trade deal is that once it gets on the fast track it will be Amtrak from here to kingdom come, and never shall a government interfere in the economy of the country. It will be running on the Reaganomic fast track. My Party has expressed the fear that that deal will take away from any subsequent Government—

**Ms. McDonald:** Harmonization.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** We notice how they use words such as “harmonize”. The word “harmony” suggests being in tune.

**Ms. McDonald:** It suggests harm.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The Hon. Member is getting ahead of me. “Harmony” suggests that somehow they are in tune. That is the musical connotation of the word.

**Mr. Keeper:** What about discord?

**Mr. Harris:** Whose tune are they playing?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** They are playing Ronnie’s tune from “Sundown”.

**Mr. Harris:** And Brian is singing.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** That is the musical connotation. The Hon. Member referred to its root word “harm”. The guy sings “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling” in harmony or discord with Ronnie in Quebec. There he was singing it up, and the guy thinks that everything else must be on the same note.

We believe that the downside of the agreement will be harmful. Instead of harmonizing Canada, it will be harming Canadians. It will be creating irreparable harm to the country.

It is a justifiable fear that programs like the unemployment insurance program will be sacrificed when the Americans get

around to harmonizing—and let us hope that they will not be around for too much longer—what we have with what they lack.

I said that I wanted to talk about the administration of the unemployment insurance program. Over the last year I have seen one of the most frightful administrations of unemployment insurance I have ever seen since I came here in 1972 when the Government announced that pension income would be considered earned income. We had a subsequent backing away from that until Bill C-50 was passed in the House last spring.

What has happened is that many Canadians who should have been entitled to unemployment insurance were told, when they applied in December, 1985 and in January, 1986, to use up their pension income and severance pay and then to come back and file for unemployment insurance. When they came back in April to file, they were told that they did not file a claim before January 5, 1986, so they were not eligible to collect what Bill C-50 delivered.

We have a frightful mess across the country. Thousands of Canadians have been denied unemployment insurance benefits. By my calculation, 30,000 Canadians who were entitled to it did not get unemployment insurance because of the pensions and severance pay they received when their companies closed or when they had to leave the Armed Forces. It was a frightful maladministration of the program. Today we still have thousands of Canadians who are trying to fight with the bureaucracy to establish a claim. We deal with them every day.

The Standing Committee on Employment and Immigration decided that it wanted to take a look at the Department and its administration *vis-à-vis* unemployment insurance and employment programs. We were led by the Hon. member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) who exhibited some independence from the Government. We had staked out the areas in which we wanted to move. Lo and behold, the Government could not stand that kind of independence, moved in the goon squad, and had him removed. It put in his place a new chairman who promptly got the committee to buy the Malaryk book on the Department of Employment and Immigration. Its second move was to cancel the appearance of witnesses before the committee. The witnesses arrived. The meeting was cancelled. This cost the committee \$1,500. This is the kind of action which the Government takes. As soon as we were getting closer to examining the Department, the Government decided it could not stand that, that the bureaucrats, the nabobs in the bureaucracy would be supreme, and their political minions ran in to defend them.

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The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr. Weiner) and the Minister of Employment and Immigration have to understand that they are elected to make decisions, that they are not the mouthpieces of the bureaucracy. They ought to