

*Supply*

[English]

I would like to congratulate the member for South West Nova for trying to explain to the government side what a little bit of compassion is in this House. I am not worried about theatrics. I am worried about the people who are on unemployment insurance who will not qualify come January because the government does not want to pass a temporary measure, a measure that has been passed continuously since 1977 by Liberal and Conservative governments.

The only thing we are asking today is that the government continue a tradition and pass a temporary measure while waiting for the decision of the other place on Bill C-21.

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member for South West Nova that she look at the "blues" because I seem to recall she said that Bill C-21 mandates a uniform 14-week variable entry requirement across the country. That is what she said. That is what I heard her say.

**Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova):** No.

**Mr. Kempling:** Check it out. The bulk of her remarks sounded like that old Abbott and Costello routine, "Who's on first, what's on second"? It was so disjointed it was very difficult to follow.

• (1550)

When I saw this motion I wondered how people could be so cynical as to put a motion like this before the House of Commons pertaining to a bill that was in the Senate. In effect, what they are asking us to do is to set aside what we have done through committee hearings and through debate in the House of Commons and bring in another bill to handle one portion of what we have done.

If you go back and look at Senate debates on this matter in 1988 you will see that Senator Frith agreed with the deputy leader of the government in the Senate that the variable entry rate should be made permanent and should be put into legislation. That is what Senator Frith agreed with. That is what we have done, we have put it into legislation and now they want to change that somehow.

Bill C-21 passed this House on the evening of November 6 and for almost a month the Senate did nothing

about it. They fiddled and diddled, that is about the size of it. They issued a series of press releases: "Senate Liberals consider delaying jobless change", "Senate likely to give UIC bills rough ride, Liberal Frith hints", "Senate may stall unemployment bill says Senator Frith", "Battle over UI reforms threatens eligibility rules", "Senate threatens to stall UI bill could bring serious hardships". That is the sort of little PR game they played in the Senate, Madam Speaker.

They may be wise to listen to what *The Guardian* from Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, my favourite province, had to say. The headline reads: "Did the Grit Senators think this one through?" The article said: "It appears the Liberal-dominated Senate could be instrumental in assuring that a number of Islanders do not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. Word from employment minister Barbara McDougall's office is that if the Senate delays approval of the bill amending the Unemployment Insurance Act beyond January 6, the variable entrance requirements provision, formerly passed annually by Parliament, will not apply, resulting in Islanders who do not have 14 weeks of work credits not being eligible for benefits. All it took was 10 weeks when that provision was passed each year but now it is contained in new legislation and can't be effective until the whole bill is passed".

It goes on to say that they should really look at this: "Liberal Senators may not like the bill. Nevertheless it is going to go into effect eventually and it is time to choose between speedy passage or depriving unemployed workers of insurance benefits because of a matter of a few weeks of work. Surely the choice is obvious".

Surely the choice is obvious, Madam Speaker. The Senate set up a special committee on November 9 and did nothing until last week when they had their first organization meeting. They have made a lot of noise about a certain number of groups who want to appear before them and present their positions.

The legislative committee of this House heard 200 groups when it travelled across the country. Those groups represented national, provincial, regional and local labour groups and unions. They heard national business groups, provincial business groups and local business groups representing both small and large business; legal clinics, anti-poverty clinics, UI action groups, family groups, youth groups, disabled human rights groups, churches, co-ops, regional governments, tribal councils, individuals, pensioners, adoptive parents and