

**Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, my friend is becoming more and more expert at making short speeches and getting his arguments submitted before—

**Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition):** The leader is the last one who should complain.

**Senator Olson:** I am not complaining; I am complimenting him on his expertise. Setting aside all of those arguments and terminology that my friend has used in leading up to his question, I shall try to get an explanation, although I believe that if he had read some of the daily news he would have found that the explanation has already been given by Air Canada.

### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

#### EXHAUSTION OF BENEFITS—GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Hon. C. William Doody:** Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for Social Development.

**Hon. Martial Asselin:** You are lucky he is here.

**Senator Doody:** First of all, I want to thank the minister for joining us this afternoon. It is very rare, indeed, that we have an opportunity to pose a question to this very busy minister. I appreciate the fact that he did drop in yesterday afternoon but it was a very fleeting visit and I did not get an opportunity to ask his advice on a matter of grave importance to the people of my province and, indeed, the people across Canada.

I understand that the Minister of National Health and Welfare has said that no meeting of federal and provincial welfare ministers is contemplated, nor is one necessary because there will not be enough people involved in the unemployment insurance exhaustion. There are more and more people running out of unemployment insurance benefits every week and more and more of them are going on provincial welfare rolls. Could the minister tell us if that is the policy of the government, or is it simply an opinion? Will there indeed be a meeting of welfare ministers to discuss this very alarming situation in the provinces?

**Hon. Jack Austin (Minister of State for Social Development):** Honourable senators, I think the record will show that I am here most times—

**Senator Asselin:** No.

**Senator Austin:**—and anxious to answer questions.

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport):** Hear, hear.

**Senator Austin:** I would be pleased to receive notice of any questions honourable senators would like replies to, because that would allow me to answer in a most timely and, I hope, adequate way. I appreciate the fact that Senator Donahoe accepts that I am busy and, indeed, I acknowledge that I am.

● (1420)

**Senator Asselin:** You just came from the north.

**Senator Austin:** I am somewhat confused—

**Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition):** That is nothing new.

**Senator Austin:**—since I do not know the source of the quotation. I have not seen the newspaper column, if that is, indeed, what is being relied upon.

The minister responsible for unemployment insurance is the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Employment and Immigration. If the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Honourable Monique Bégin, has mentioned some item regarding a meeting of the federal and provincial ministers responsible for unemployment insurance, I am not sure in what context that mention was made.

**Senator Doody:** Honourable senators, I am constantly aware of the strictures of the Leader of the Government in the Senate to keep questions as brief as possible and that we should not become involved in speech-making. However, obviously, a preamble is necessary in view of the fact that my name is Doody, not Donahoe. Senator Donahoe may very well be satisfied with the attendance of the minister, but I am not at all thrilled with his performance and his attention to his duties in this chamber. His responsibility should not be fulfilled through the mail, but rather by his presence in this chamber. He has to answer for the government in this chamber.

**Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government):** We try to answer questions; we do not try to thrill you.

**Senator Doody:** Despite the fact that he has a tremendous number of duties—and I know how busy he is—I thought the relaxation of the softball schedule during this season of the year would give him more time to devote to his other chores.

**Senator Perrault:** Don't get political.

**Senator Doody:** Among those other chores is responsibility for the social welfare of the people of Canada. The social welfare of the people of Canada, fortunately, is in the hands of Senator Austin; the physical welfare of the people of Canada, unfortunately, is in the hands of Senator Perrault.

**Senator Frith:** Foul ball.

**Senator Perrault:** You get five minutes in the penalty box for that.

**Senator Doody:** I just threw that in as an appeal to the good nature of Senator Austin because I know now he has to come forth with all sorts of generous offers of help for the people in the country who are running out of unemployment insurance benefits.

I am aware that the minister responsible for unemployment insurance benefits is the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy who has not yet been fortunate enough to receive an appointment to this chamber, but I assume that will come after the next election. My comments could also apply to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In the meantime, the unemployment statistics show that, currently, 5,000 people are running out of unemployment insurance benefits each month and going on welfare rolls. The figure is expected to increase to between 7,000 and 9,000 per