

*Unemployment Insurance*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Hon. Member has already spoken so someone else will have to move the amendment once we have disposed of the amendment which is being debated at the moment.

**Mr. Riis:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order to clarify the situation. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), has been speaking to the amendment put forward by my colleague from the Liberal Party. Therefore, after we dispose of the amendment, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt will actually have an opportunity to speak again to the original motion. If he so wishes at that time he can then put his amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt has effectively spoken on the amendment. Thus he could be heard again on the main motion, of course.

**Mrs. Mary Collins (Capilano):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in debate on Bill C-50. As all Hon. Members know we will be sitting today and into the evening in order to have an opportunity to have a full discussion of the provisions of the Bill.

I would like to deal with the basic principles of what we are discussing today. That will take us back to November of 1984 when, as a Government, we came out with a policy statement which stated that, basically, all forms of income arising out of employment should be treated equally with respect to applying for unemployment insurance income. That is the basic principle that the Government has put forward, and it is our policy.

As some Hon. Members have already indicated, in November of 1984 when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) introduced this principle he said that it would become effective as of January, 1985. In December of that year the then Minister of Employment and Immigration, having looked at the situation and having recognized that there would need to be a further transitional period because people had not had the opportunity to change their retirement plans or make the appropriate arrangements, agreed to an extension of the implementation of this provision to January 5, 1986.

Today, in recognition of some of the concerns that have arisen in the interim period we are bringing forward legislation to clarify those concerns. In particular, we will put into effect a distinction between those persons who retire and those persons who, having taken an early retirement have not actually gone out of the workforce, who then go back into the workforce, will requalify at some later date if they are unemployed and be eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

The third provision of the legislation deals with the issue of severance or separation pay and provides a more equitable way of dealing with it. It enables those who have received separation pay to qualify for UI benefits under the appropriate circumstances and receive the full benefit to which they would be entitled, perhaps up to as much as 50 weeks. I know from my own experience in dealing with constituents that these

measures will be very much welcomed. In fact, we know that there will be about 55,000 Canadians who will benefit to the tune of about \$295 million as a result of the legislation we are putting forward today. That is why we want to get it done, so that those who will qualify can begin to receive those additional funds.

I think that the basic principle has to be clearly understood. I am not sure that it has been understood by many Canadians. It makes the distinction that all forms of income from employment, in this case including pensions that arise as a result of employment, be treated in the same way. Therefore, this income would be deducted from any eligible benefits for UI. Of course, we know that in some cases where there is a high pension that person is not eligible for UI, obviously.

We have made this important distinction. It is one which has been brought to the attention of many in British Columbia. We had a meeting not long ago in Nanaimo at which we met with a number of retirees. We certainly heard from them that in many cases the retirement they were taking was not a permanent retirement, it was an early retirement. They were actually going back into the workforce and would be contributing again to unemployment insurance. In the event that they are laid off from that job, or some other unfortunate circumstance arose, they should be eligible to collect UI. As my colleague from Nanaimo—Alberni has indicated, that is something we felt to be only fair and appropriate. So we are very pleased that the Government has come forward with that amendment.

We also recognize that there has been some confusion about the various eligibility rules. Therefore, we are making it clear that those persons who have retired and who were receiving pension income but who had applied for UI benefits prior to January 5, 1986, will have their claims dealt with under the old rules.

• (1210)

Those who applied prior to January 5, 1986 come under the old rules, and those who apply after that date will come under the new rules. Hopefully that distinction, which is being clearly made in the legislation, will clear up some of the concerns we have heard over the past year in dealing with the issue.

We recognized that some of the administrative procedures and proposals made earlier caused some confusion, so we eliminated that complexity and the potential for uneven application across the country. We brought about changes to the implementation of that January 5, 1986 ruling.

The legislation with which we are now dealing draws a very clear and simple line to ensure fairness in the transitional provisions of the regulation for early retirees. I just want to make very clear that those who applied for unemployment insurance prior to January, 1986 under the old rules will have their entitlement to benefits determined under the old rules. Equally and in a straightforward manner, those who apply for