

Employment and Immigration

Mr. Alexander: I figured my socialist friends would jump in once I gave them the opportunity. I am prepared to go along with the debate as long as we arrive at a conclusion later on as to what will be the voting in terms of the package. That is somewhat tricky because motion No. 11 is in the name of the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), motion No. 15 is in the name of the hon. minister, motion No. 29 is in the name of the hon. minister, motion No. 30 is in the name of the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes), and motion No. 32 is in the name of the hon. minister.

I am not asking for a ruling at this particular time, but a little later we should indicate that the vote on motion No. 11 would include motion No. 30, and the vote on motion No. 15 would include motions Nos. 29 and 32. In other words, my suggestion is that we must have two votes in order to clear this up. I am not asking for a ruling at this particular time; I am merely trying to get some indication of what is going on around here. The parliamentary secretary is smiling and nodding, so I think he understands, as he usually does.

An hon. Member: The odd couple.

Mr. Alexander: I hear the hon. member say something but, as always, it was unintelligible. If he would care to stand up and help me out, I should appreciate it. I am not asking for a ruling at this time. That is the point I want to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): As was stated before, motion No. 11 standing in the name of the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) will require a separate vote. A separate vote will be held on motion No. 15, which will dispose of motions Nos. 15, 29, 30 and 32. The hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez).

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): It seems to me that is what we all understood when Your Honour made an announcement earlier this morning. I suppose some of us are sleepy after last night. As I was saying, the effect of the minister's amendments in motion No. 15 and the other motions standing in his name will be to vary the length of time which claimants will have to be in the work force in order to collect benefits.

At the outset, with respect to Bill C-27, we said the Unemployment Insurance Commission thrust upon the minister this idea of changing the entrance requirements to collect benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act and to vary the length of time in which a claimant would be able to collect benefits. It seems to us those are most inappropriate steps to take at this time when unemployment in this country has been running at 8 per cent. If one looks at the figures, one finds that we have had a consistently high rate of unemployment in Canada, compared with other technologically developed countries in the western world.

● (1200)

We have superimposed, at this time, changes in the Unemployment Insurance Act which were based on a study entitled "The Comprehensive Review of the Unemployment Insurance

Program in Canada". The minister's bureaucrats were quite proud of it and they insistently thrust upon the committee the fact that they had the basis for these decisions and recommendations, that they had the facts. Indeed, this replaced the Bible; it became the "word as revealed". But when we looked at it we found it was a review done by the department itself. I have been in education long enough, some 16 years—

Mr. Friesen: Does it show?

Mr. Rodriguez: I hope that the little bit of honesty which I learned in the classrooms and in administering a school comes through in the House, rather than the phony-baloney of hon. members to my right and those who sit across the aisle who really belong to the same club.

An hon. Member: The Rideau Club?

Mr. Rodriguez: No, the parliamentary club. One of the things I have learned, in terms of evaluating educational goals, is that one of the no-no's is never to ask educators to evaluate whether they have achieved their goals, because invariably they will tell you they always achieve their goals. Any evaluation should be done by an independent body, apart and aside from the very people who are given the responsibility for drafting legislation and making recommendations to the minister responsible with respect to the act which they will eventually administer. That seems to be the wrong way around.

I tell members of the House quite frankly that this comprehensive review was done in 1973-74, a period when the unemployment rate in Canada was much lower than it is now. We are experiencing approximately 8 per cent unemployment in this country. Do not forget that 8 per cent now is calculated according to the latest method that StatsCanada brought in some months ago. Back in January, StatsCanada changed its method of calculating the rate of unemployment and magnificently cut Newfoundland's rate in half overnight solely as a result of the way they calculated it. The period 1973-74 was prior to the StatsCanada changes.

An hon. Member: You haven't got your facts right.

Mr. Rodriguez: The hon. member comes from an area in New Brunswick where the unemployment rate is atrociously high, but he sits here making smart-assed remarks.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): All you do is filibuster.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, we did not hear the hon. member in committee. In the committee he was silent as the dodo, as silent and as extinct as the dodo. He had nothing to say about a piece of legislation that adversely affects his part of the country.

Mr. Nystrom: Disgusting.

Mr. Rodriguez: I wish he would get up in the House and make a speech with respect to this bill.