

Social Policy

countless thousands of people when it said: "You are no longer entitled to unemployment insurance". The government kicked them out to pasture.

Mr. Caccia: You voted for that legislation; you supported it.

Mr. Alexander: That was another cruel hoax and inequity. If the hon. member wants to, he can check it out, but what we did was to register our concern about that inequity. I will not pay any attention to what he says. We took issue with that government program the same as we took issue with the measure regarding spouse's allowances.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caccia: You voted for it.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not significant, Mr. Speaker, how disturbed they become over there when you hit a nerve? I do not want to talk about the polls because that is not the subject of our discussion, but I would have plenty of reason to be concerned if I were a member of the Liberal party and watched it go down the drain. Why is it going down the drain? Because the Liberals are insensitive. They are in this business for the sake of power, and they do not give a damn about the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: Now it is coming home to roost. That is why they are sitting over there worried and scared. I heard the clapping they had in caucus this morning which was supposed to be for our benefit, but it was faked, just like most of their policies are in the first instance.

Let me get on with the subject under discussion. Another thing that I admire about my colleagues, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. member for St. John's East, is that they brought another point to the attention of hon. members opposite.

An hon. Member: Why are you smiling?

Mr. Alexander: I have to smile. I am not really angry; I pity those opposite because they do not understand. My smile is a smile of compassion as I stand here speaking on such a serious matter. They are not bad people; their only problem is that they are Liberals.

My colleagues to whom I have just referred spoke about the cost of living. I want to read again some comments that I passed on to one of my colleagues who was going to deliver a speech or write a letter on the needs of senior citizens. My colleagues really hit a very important point. This is what I wrote to one of my colleagues:

Cost of Living—it is noted that the senior citizen is primarily interested in heat, clothing, food and shelter, etc., but it is noted that the consumer price index is based on a number of things which do not directly affect senior citizens and therefore they would like a new formula invoked regarding the consumer price index which would take account of the cost of living with which they are involved.

[Mr. Alexander.]

This was not discounted by the former minister of national health and welfare. I do not wish to paraphrase him or take his words out of context, but, as I understand it, he thinks that suggestion interesting. I did not hear the hon. lady's speech, but I put that suggestion before her again, as did the hon. member for St. John's East and the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Both ministers should take a long, hard look at this suggestion, because it seems to me that the formula means nothing when the cost of food and other costs go up 14 per cent while they are only entitled to 8 per cent. I may be wrong, but hon. members will get the idea.

We are moving in the wrong direction and we must look for a new formula. Let them not tell me that it cannot be done, because I remember the time when the government wanted to shaft the unemployed by bringing in amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. member for St. John's East were concerned about the less privileged. I said, after I had discussed it with my colleagues, that we would give this government notice that there should be flexibility. Rather than have a 12-week period, we would have a period from eight weeks to 12 weeks. It would be a flexible period. It would depend on the rate of unemployment and the number of weeks a person would have to work.

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At first government members said that it was impossible, that it was a bureaucratic nightmare and could not be done. Government members asked from where we got such a stupid idea. We should thank God that we have opposition members around here. The government eventually bought that policy, after espousing that it was nonsense. Now the government is taking credit for that idea and we are receiving no credit at all. Wait until the Conservative party comes into power.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: If hon. members opposite think those are all the ideas we have, they will be surprised when my party forms the government. Let me point out that after waiting for ten years I am eager.

We require a new cost of living formula to assist our senior citizens. The one which is being applied now does not meet their needs. I should like to put on the record some more of our ideas.

Mr. Paproski: Don't give them too much. We want some policies left for ourselves.

Mr. Alexander: Well, that is right. Hon. members opposite are thieves.

Mr. Martin: Go ahead.

Mr. Alexander: The government listens to our suggestions and indicates that they are no good, yet eventually implements