

Unemployment Insurance Act

the bill will be in place and effective on January 1. This bill is a multi-billion dollar item, and it will be passed in this House today through closure.

Then it will be passed on to the Senate in a very degrading form. Senators will hardly be proud of themselves if they yield to the pressure of this government and pass the bill in an hour or two. This contempt for parliament and the parliamentary process is unacceptable. The Senate as well as the House of Commons should have an opportunity to give this measure adequate consideration, but no one extended us that opportunity.

Let us consider again what the Prime Minister is supposed to have espoused early in his political life. I am referring to issue No. 11 of November 30, 1978, of the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration at page 11.10. On that page we find the following:

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, if my recollection of our Prime Minister's message in his earlier political life is accurate, he has taught us that to negotiate is not to capitulate, but to set democracy in motion.

That was an early political statement by the Prime Minister of Canada. What negotiations with the provinces took place in this instance? None. There was a meeting in Toronto. The minister gave the participants an hour and a half.

Mr. McGrath: After the fact.

Mr. McCain: The provinces came before the committee to present their cases, but no amendment has accrued from that.

This bill would transfer the cost to the taxpayers of Canada from the federal realm to the provincial realm. I ask those hon. members far to my left who have so assiduously supported everything they thought was right, including the transfer of this expense to the provinces, to refer to the election of 1974 and the processes they followed. One gentleman who took a hard stand against all amendments proposed by the official opposition failed to get himself elected. Hon. members should take the trouble to read the presentations by the provinces and remarks made in this House yesterday about the transfer of cost to municipalities by virtue of the passing of this bill. I wonder if the people of Oshawa-Whitby will embrace the leader of the New Democratic Party when their taxes go up as a result of the transfer costs to the welfare system in that area.

Mr. Peters: We are opposed to every clause in this bill, not just some.

Mr. McCain: Members of the New Democratic Party have thrown their forces more with the government than with us. There is a virtual coalition.

Mr. Peters: Nonsense.

Mr. McCain: I think there ought to be a new definition of the word "nonsense". The minister and the New Democratic Party should cause a revision to be made in dictionaries, because "nonsense" seems to be anything but ideas which

[Mr. McCain.]

originate with the NDP or the government. Any idea which comes from anywhere else is nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time is fading away. There is a problem in this field. The opposition recognizes that. The man on the street recognizes it. The provincial governments recognize it. But the federal government does not know how to solve it. This bill cures little. Passing this bill is like calling on a witch doctor to treat multiple sclerosis.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1232)

Mr. Herb Breau (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I hope the House will excuse me if I am not my normal shape today. It is because I am under medication for the flu. I might not be able to deal, for example, with the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) as I normally do; but I am sure that in the substance of my arguments, even if the form is not there, I will do the same.

I would just like to comment briefly on some of the things the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) said in his speech. One wonders why the hon. member would refer to Quebec having been treated differently in the designation of economic zones. I have never seen Statistics Canada setting up a particular system for the province of Quebec, and I wonder why a member from New Brunswick would refer to small towns in some parts of New Brunswick and say it is too bad that the government has not treated them in the same way as small towns in Quebec. When I hear members talk in this fashion, I wonder why they do not stick to the facts and explain to their constituents and to the Canadian public when they speak in the House exactly what they mean by that sort of thing.

First of all, the hon. member does not know what he is talking about when he suggests that economic zones have been set by this bill. It is not this bill that sets up economic zones. All it does is to refer to some of the effects of unemployment insurance benefits on some zones. If hon. members were honest, they would state the facts correctly and say that it is not this bill which sets down economic zones and boundaries. They have always been set down by order in council. In this case the minister has changed them by order in council, and he can change them again by order in council whenever he gets a good argument to do so. So when members start saying that it is this bill which sets up inequities in the designation of economic zones, they are just making political arguments which are completely outside the realm of this bill.

The minister has said to me personally—I believe he has said it publicly and also to other members who have asked him—that he realizes there are inequities in the designation of these boundaries, and he has said he would look at this. I am sure that if he speaks in this debate he will tell us that he is prepared to look objectively at criteria other than a clear and straight statistical arithmetical formula to make sure that these inequities are corrected.