

Supply—Labour

I was going to mention hospital insurance, which had been promised for so long by the previous government and which was brought into effect by the present government—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Surely the hon. gentleman does not wish to state something that is not accurate. The hospital insurance program was introduced in this house in 1956 by a Liberal administration, and it became law while a Liberal government was in office. Every bit of social legislation on our statute books was passed by a Liberal government.

Mr. Ricard: But never put into effect until a Conservative government was in power.

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): I am sure everybody in this country is aware of the fact that under the Liberal government there was not one single, solitary person in Canada covered by the hospital insurance act. Mind you, after 30 years of stalling I am not sure whether or not the Liberal government would ever have done anything. The present government has only claimed they moved it ahead six months. I have never accepted that view because I am not at all certain, under the conditions imposed by the Liberal government, that the scheme would ever have come into effect. In fact, I feel quite certain that it would not have come into effect because nobody was taking up the offer at that time.

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Would the hon. member permit another question?

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Martin (Timmins): I do not believe the hon. member is fully informed. He said there was no citizen in Canada getting hospital benefits at that time. Is he not aware of the fact that a hospital plan was in effect in the province of Saskatchewan since 1946?

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): I was talking about a hospital insurance plan under the federal government. I am not concerned, at this point, with what the provincial governments are doing. I am saying that the actions I have pointed out in this regard will certainly be in the mind of everybody in this country. I believe everybody in this country has to accept his share of the responsibility for how the money that has been made available by this government to the provinces has been used. Has it been used properly? I certainly am not going to go into a debate about what each province is doing with the money, but each province has had a considerable amount of money made available to it—half as much again as

under the previous government—in order to enable the province to combat unemployment.

I want to say that I do not accept the figures given by the hon. member for Essex East. I doubt very much if he accepts them himself.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member knows that that is not parliamentary. He knows that the figures I used were not my figures, but they were figures given to us by the Minister of Labour. If there was manipulation, it was done by the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): So far as manipulation is concerned, it is not in the actual figures, but what the figures constitute. He has had pointed out to him this morning that there were a good many married women, over 100,000, included in those figures which he attempted to compare with the previous figures under the Liberal government. The married women were not included in the old figures, so that is not a proper comparison. On the basis of these figures the hon. member wants to say we have a higher percentage than we ever had before, but he never made it plain to the people that the figures included a lot more people who would have had nothing under the policy of the previous administration and who would not have been included in these figures.

In so far as some of the other policies of the Minister of Labour and his department are concerned, I want to say that, while the hon. member for Essex East cannot recognize all that is done in that department, we can recall that the international association of personnel in employment security held a convention at which the minister was awarded the association's highest honour for his contributions to Canada's national employment service. This is not a political organization but some of the comments we heard today were of a political nature. This convention was attended by delegates from Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, Peru and the Philippine Islands, as well as Canada and the United States. This organization recognized the value of the program that the Minister of Labour has put forward in this country in trying to make an effective organization out of the national employment service. That is certainly something which was not done under the previous government. I do not think there is any need for me to go into detail because it is well known across the country that the placement division of the national employment service have been

[Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway).]