

Unemployment Insurance Act

industry of Prince Edward Island, fishing off the Atlantic coast or the Pacific coast or farming in any part of Canada, would have been cut off.

This bill would shift to the private sector the government's financial responsibilities of sharing unemployment insurance costs. Bill C-3 will take the government out of this cost sharing by eliminating the "threshold rate", an eight-year moving average of unemployment rates, above which the government pays the cost of benefits. This is expected to save the government \$378 million in fiscal 1980-81. Of course, it will add exactly the same amount to the premiums paid by the employers and the employees. In other words, what the government takes away with the one hand it gains on the other hand.

Under the proposed amendments the government will continue to pay only for regional extended benefits. The initial and extended labour force phases of unemployment insurance will be paid entirely through employer-employee premiums. At present, all special benefit phases—sickness, maternity leave, etc.—are financed entirely through the premium account, as are all the administrative costs relating to the unemployment insurance program. As a result of an order in council announced by the present minister on April 3, 1980, the administrative cost to National Employment Service, estimated at \$246 million this year, will also be a charge against premiums. Because they are a charge against premiums they will add to the cost of administering the program which, until now, was paid by the government.

I would like to make one more observation on this bill and how it affects a particular group of workers. I refer specifically to women. In the press release which the minister issued announcing Bill C-3, he noted that the government plans to introduce regulating changes that would change minimum insurability provisions so that instead of being required to work 20 hours a week, 15 hours a week, or 20 per cent of maximum earnings, would be the new basis of entitlement for part-time workers. He cited this as an improvement which would eliminate the criticism that the existing rule discriminates against women who make up 71 per cent of the part time labour force, although they make up 50 per cent of the total labour force.

This change is expected to take effect on January 1, 1981, and it is a step in the right direction. However, we would point out that other sections of the Unemployment Insurance Act have regulations which specifically discriminate against women, and they need to be changed—for example, the "magic ten" rule with respect to provisions for maternity benefits, and that adoptive mothers are ineligible to collect benefits.

While there are some very minor improvements in this bill, the whole direction of the bill is to continue the process by which since 1971 the Liberal government—and the Conservative government had the same intention when it was in office—and it would have followed through had it stayed in office—has whittled away at the Unemployment Insurance Act to get the government out of its responsibilities of ensuring that we have full employment in this country and that we give every Canadian who wants to work and opportunity to work for

decent wages, and to put the costs of the unemployment insurance program on those who are unemployed and on the employers and employees of this country. To the extent that they succeed the government will have less pressure and less of an obligation to adopt programs and devise plans which would put the unemployed of this country back to work, where they want to be. It is for that reason that we are so critical of this proposal and of many other proposals of this government.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington): Mr. Speaker, it is always great to follow an NDP member in one of these debates. I would like to start off by quoting a little poetry which goes:

They are so pure, so pure as can be,
For they are members of the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kempling: Have hon. members ever wondered what happens to an NDP member when he either retires or is defeated? One of them became a director of Husky Oil. There was another member of the NDP who came here from the west coast and who was here for years. He was finally defeated. That former member ended up working as a stockbroker. He came back to this Parliament and padded up and down the halls trying to sell stocks to members. That same man stood in the House here and damned corporations and companies for years.

Another NDP member would stand in this House and cry for 6 per cent mortgages. That member sold his farm, and what did he do with the proceeds? He invested in 16 per cent second mortgages. The way things are going, I would expect that the hon. member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) will probably end up as director of the Canadian Pacific. That is where he is destined to go. We had the president of the Canadian Pacific before a committee of this House.

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I have been waiting patiently to speak on this bill. I have some very important points that I would like to make on the Unemployment Insurance Act. The present speaker is taking up time which I would like to have.

An hon. Member: Wait your turn.

Mr. Kempling: The hon. member can wait for his turn. When it comes, then he can put what he has to say on the record.

The day that the president of Canadian Pacific came before a committee of the House, I said to the hon. member for Regina West, "Hey, your buddy is here, the fellow you are always damning in the House. Why don't you come before the committee so you will have something else to do tonight?"

Mr. Benjamin: I did, Bill.

Mr. Kempling: How do you spell NDP, Mr. Speaker? It is spelled "phony". There are some matters with regard to this bill that I would like to talk about. Members from all sides who have discussed this bill have brought forward some very