

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

• (2100)

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, the proposal before us calls for the removal of the ceiling on advances under section 137 of the Unemployment Insurance Act; it removes the limit of \$800 million. We in this party intend to support that proposal because we believe it is necessary, just as the warrants for the period from January 4 to February 7 were necessary. If unemployed people have qualified for unemployment insurance benefits, they are entitled under law to those benefits.

We have heard a number of speeches from the hatchetmen in the official opposition including the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). In the 11 years I have been here, in all the times he has brandished his hatchet only once did it accomplish what he intended. I remember rumours and stories about bankruptcies in Quebec, but when the chips were down the hatchet disappeared because the hon. member could not produce the evidence. Similarly with his speech today; it provided little evidence.

Members of the official opposition have argued that the warrants were illegal and that this bill is needed because the government has acted illegally. I am not going to deal with the legal aspects because my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), dealt with them in his speech last night in a way in which I could not possibly duplicate. He demonstrated to anybody who wanted to listen that not only were they legal but that the action the Conservative government took when it was in power was much worse than anything this government has done. I noticed that the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), who argued some of the supposed constitutional and legal points, disappeared while the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was speaking. Perhaps when he realized the hon. member's argument was so powerful he decided not to stick around.

We intend to support this bill because we want the unemployed to receive their benefits. We have heard a great deal from the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) about being married to the government because we are supporting this bill. Let me say to the hon. member, who has quite a few unemployed in his constituency who want their benefits, that when the government brings forward Bill C-125, which is going to make the qualification for unemployment insurance benefits much more difficult—

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** They are not going to bring it forward.

**Mr. Orlikow:**—we are not going to support that bill. The Conservative party has talked consistently about the need to tighten up the regulations. If they support that bill we will then see who is in bed with whom at that time. The hon. member for Hamilton West and other members of the official opposition who have spoken have expressed surprise and concern that the fund is so much in the red. They say the government should have known this. Of course the government should have known, but a government which has been so wrong on every economic matter—

**Mr. Benjamin:** Stupid.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

**Mr. Orlikow:** A government that has been so stupid, as the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) says—

**An hon. Member:** You have supported them.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** Why doesn't that sheep from Burlington shut up.

**Mr. Orlikow:** I do not mind his interjections because the more he interjects, the more stupid he appears on the record. A government that has been so wrong in the last four years about the economic situation in this country had to be wrong about this situation.

In December, 1969, when unemployment was a good deal lower than it is now, both in percentage figures and in total numbers, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said the major concern in the country was the rapidly rising cost of living and he was going to stop that by slowing down the economy. He succeeded brilliantly: in 1970 we had a cost of living increase of about 2 per cent. Of course, the rate of unemployment, as we had predicted, went up very substantially and has been going up ever since.

What member who has been here from 1968 does not remember the speeches we heard from the former minister of finance? He was rewarded for the brilliant job he did by being appointed president of the Canadian Transport Commission. Month after month as Statistics Canada brought out the unemployment figures the minister stood in his place and told us that prosperity was just around the corner. He said the government was instituting a program which would see unemployment begin to fall.

On one occasion—I do not have the quotation here—the then minister of finance challenged the Leader of the Official Opposition to resign if unemployment was not below 5 per cent by the end of the year. Of course, that did not happen. I remember the minister's first speech after he was appointed in which he said he did not want to deal with the mundane and routine numbers game. He said as far as he was concerned any unemployment was too much and what he wanted was full employment. He did not succeed. In fact, things are worse than they were under the former finance minister.

We on this side of the House began in 1969 to say that the government's policies were wrong. We said then, as we have said since, that what the government should do is follow an expansionary policy in order to put people back to work. Our advice was ignored. After the former minister of manpower and immigration left office he said it would have been a lot better had the government asked for the resignation of some of its top economic advisers. If there ever has been a government that received bad advice, it is the government we have had since 1968. That government has been wrong about unemployment ever since the Prime Minister took office.

This government promised that unemployment would be reduced, when in fact it has steadily gone up. That is the real reason the unemployment insurance fund is in financial difficulty. I will refer in a moment to the position taken by members of the official opposition in that