

Unemployment Insurance Act

will reduce the degree of flimflam. To that extent, I think Canadians will be the richer.

These two fairly simple and fairly quick changes will make the existing measure slightly better. However, we would like to emphasize that much remains to be done. The minister has indicated that he will appoint a special task force, that he will invite the participation of parliamentarians in the work of that task force. When I have had a better chance to check *Hansard*, I think that I will discover that at the same time he invites that participation—that he says that all Canadians should be involved, that there should be discussion—he rules out discussion on two or three of the aspects which require examination. We on this side of the House are convinced that they should be part of that discussion package. It is not good to hear on the one hand the kind of rhetoric which suggests participation and, on the other hand, to hear the specific details which restrict participation. I can assure the minister opposite that we will do our best to make sure that, to whatever extent he allows us to participate in that discussion, we broaden the terms of reference to include all of those items which we believe should be discussed.

Given that as background, I think it might be wise to take a minute or two to examine why we need and why we have such concern about an unemployment insurance program and fund. I agree with the minister opposite that this is a very important piece of social legislation.

Just before coming into the House I checked the figures and found that there are somewhere between 800,000 and 900,000 Canadians who are drawing benefits from this fund today. That figure is getting close to 8 per cent of the work force. Any piece of legislation that affects that many Canadians, families and dependants, is an important piece of legislation. But at the same time the very fact that this piece of legislation is important also addresses itself to the fact that we have a tremendous and growing unemployment problem in this country.

I have travelled this nation from coast to coast and I have done research work with the unemployed in this country. It is my conviction that a very large percentage of the unemployed in Canada—a very large percentage of those who draw unemployment insurance benefits—would rather work than be forced into the situation where they could not work because there was no work available.

We have said to the minister opposite on more than one occasion in the second reading debate on Bill C-19 and, in particular, in the Committee of the Whole procedure we asked the minister and suggested to him repeatedly that he has a kind of residual ministry. In other words, he picks up the problems that are caused by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and caused by other ministers in his government. We have suggested that he should be fighting for the unemployed in this country and quarrelling with the other ministers of the Crown by pushing them, and by getting them to do things that need doing in Canada. May I remind the minister of two or three of those.

Freedom of speech in this House was denied by a closure bill when we were debating the issue of borrowing \$12 billion. We object, for many reasons, to the federal government borrowing that sum of money. As a previous government, we were reducing that figure. The figure would have been two-thirds the amount of what this government intends to borrow in this fiscal year.

The federal government is borrowing close to one-third of the money which is borrowed in this country. Money is borrowed on the basis of an auction market. When the federal government tries to buy money, it drives interest rates up. As a result, it makes the cost of purchasing a home more expensive, a car more expensive, and furniture more expensive. And yet the cost of money which goes up because of the federal government borrowing is the primary factor in the weakness of the Canadian economy, the lack of jobs existing in this country today and the lack of jobs which has existed for close to a decade.

No matter how often we bring up that subject or how forcefully we attempt to bring it up, hon. members opposite smile and take the easy political way out, and borrow more money tomorrow and make the situation worse.

On this side of the House we have said that a small expenditure relative to the better than \$60 billion which this government intends to spend—a small portion of the \$12 billion which it intends to borrow—a small portion of that should be dedicated to the housing industry. If we could put the building of 100,000 houses back on stream which this economy has lost this year—an expenditure of close to \$100 million—we would create employment for 150,000 people as well as the housing units which this country needs.

On this side of the House we feel that it is always a tragedy when there are so many skilled people and dedicated Canadians who would like to work, but who through the actions of the government opposite are not allowed to work because the government is dedicated to the easy political solution rather than the long-term solid solution for the Canadian economy.

In the budget which members on that side of the House along with the NDP defeated in this House of Commons in December last, there were provisions for assistance to the fishing industry. They were designed to create jobs in the building of vessels. They were designed to create jobs for fishermen and jobs for those who work in the processing plants where the fish is canned and made available for the tables of Canadians. Those measures were eliminated by the Minister of Finance and they have not been replaced. The mortgage deductibility provisions designed to help housing were eliminated by the Minister of Finance and members opposite. Those measures have not been replaced and housing jobs are being lost.

● (1600)

I come from a region of this country, being the member for Calgary West, where the oil industry is a major industry, both in my city and province. I have begun to hear rumblings that, for the first time since 1975, there are drilling rigs which exist