

Senator MacEachen: Senator Simard is obviously an innocent when it comes to parliamentary work. I was the government House Leader in the House of Commons on three separate occasions and it was frequently the practice to negotiate with the opposition when you needed a bill and they did not like certain features of it. You negotiated. If you were smart you did it frequently. Sometimes governments are not smart. They attempt to put everything in one bundle, and often they fail. I remember when I was putting a particular bill through the House of Commons and the man on the other side who would not give me an inch was Mr. Diefenbaker. I went to his office and talked to him about it; that improved things a lot.

Senator Barootes: It was a minority government!

Senator MacEachen: It improved things a lot. It seems to me very unwise for any government in these circumstances in Canada to say to the Senate, or any other group, that it will not listen, talk or negotiate. I hope it will take a different attitude with respect to Bill C-21.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Heath Macquarrie: Honourable senators, I wonder if my distinguished fellow maritimer would permit a question. I do not regard him as a child by any means, since he has been on the Hill longer than I have, but I think he touched upon something that we cannot deal with fully under this item. I think the idea of conferences between the two houses is a very important subject for those who are gung-ho on Senate reform. It would be very useful.

I wonder if the honourable senator, whose parliamentary expertise I have admired for many years, would consider that perhaps he is slightly unfair in suggesting that the problems of unemployment in Atlantic Canada are in some unique way the product of the performance or nonperformance of the present government.

It seems to me—and I am sure he knows this—that we who began Confederation have seen the economic fulcrum moving to the West over the years. Our people have had to go to Boston or Upper Canada to find jobs. I gained many votes in 1957 because Walter Gordon suggested that the thing to do was to move the maritimers into another part of the country. Do you not think it is somewhat unfair to put the blame for these problems, which grieve us all and cry out for redress, totally on the doorstep of the people who are occupying the corridors of power in Ottawa now?

Senator MacEachen: If I did not put it correctly, I regret it. What I was saying is that government policy, whether it be monetary or defence, has an impact on unemployment and employment. The national government has a lot of power and has a substantial effect on the levels of unemployment. I believe I cited Summerside, but I could select some other illustration to make the argument that, because the government benefits so much from such high employment, it ought to make some payment when there is high unemployment, and, therefore, provide help with unemployment insurance benefits.

[Senator Simard.]

I did not make the blanket charge that my honourable friend Senator Macquarrie thought I made. I was making that point.

Hon. Arthur Tremblay: Honourable senators, before I begin what I had planned to say I should like to ask Senator MacEachen a question in order to clarify one point. As I understood the fishermen's benefits scheme, you said that you have amended the sections relating to that in such a way that the government will keep paying the amounts required to fill the gap between the contributions of the fishermen and the cost of the benefits they receive. Is that what you meant to say, or did I misunderstand you?

Senator MacEachen: I think you misunderstood me, senator. Honourable senators, there is no amendment in this set of amendments that obligates the government to continue with its contributions. We contemplated making that amendment in the committee. Maybe it should have been made. I hope it will be made before we deal with the bill, but we were waiting for some information from the department with respect to the composition of benefits. In brief, there is no amendment in these amendments to bring that about.

Senator Tremblay: That was my reading. I obviously did not hear correctly what Senator MacEachen said. Speaking of the fishermen's benefits scheme, it is clearly understood now from the answer that Senator MacEachen has given that the financing of those benefits for fishermen follows Bill C-21; that is, they are transferred to the unemployment insurance fund.

[*Translation*]

Honourable Senators, Senator MacEachen raised the possibility of an amendment with respect to the approval procedures for the regulations concerning the so-called fishermen's benefits scheme.

A similar amendment has also been proposed concerning the regulations or assistance plans available to some categories of unemployed.

I should like to read exactly what the Committee proposed on the first of these two points:

If, within ten sitting days after the day on which the plan is laid before either House of Parliament, a notice is given in either House of a motion to the effect that the plan is unacceptable signed by not less than fifteen members of the Senate, in the case of a notice given in the Senate, and by not less than thirty members of the House of Commons, in the case of a notice given in that House, and the question on the motion itself is not decided within ten sitting days after the notice was given, the plan shall, upon the expiry of that period of ten days, be deemed to have been rejected.

As to the regulations governing the fishermen's benefits scheme, the Committee proposed a similar procedure which required, however, in this case either of the two Houses to vote on a motion calling for the approval of the said regulations to be denied.

Honourable Senators, these are extremely radical proposals in terms of procedure and the function of the Senate in particular. Let us not be concerned with the Commons' role as