

There is no reason for this type of pick-pocketing by the Government. That is what it is, it is pick-pocketing by the Government. I say to the Government, shame on you. At a time when the fund is generating those types of surpluses—and I know that Tory back-benchers will all think it is the appropriate time to privatize the unemployment insurance program, we know that that is what we might hear from them—this is the time to give workers and small-businessmen a break on unemployment insurance.

Mr. Harris: Why won't they?

Mr. Rodriguez: The Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris) says, "Why won't they?" I simply think that it is once again the bureaucracy in the Employment and Immigration Department exercising undue direction to the Minister. This is a Department where the bureaucracy runs the elected officials.

I have looked at this Department long and hard, and I think that the direction has come from the Deputy Minister and those minions and nabobs who surround and advise him. They want to be able to say that they wiped off the deficit in jig time. "We are efficient administrators". It is an indirect taxation on workers and employers in this country.

They all talk about getting government off the backs of workers and employers. Here was a chance to give them a break. Instead, the Government wishes to get that deficit back in 2.5 years rather than over a period of four years. That is my concern.

The other concern I have is about this variable entrance requirement. I am not as paranoid as the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) who spoke before me. The Hon. Member saw this as some plot with respect to the free trade deal coming in for one year and then cutting out unemployment insurance. I have a similar concern, because when the free trade discussions commenced, we started to get leaks from behind closed doors that the Americans wanted our social programs on the table. Remember that our UI was on the table, our medicare program was on the table, our family allowances were on the table. Old Simon came to the rescue, and Simon says, "We got them to take it off the table".

It does not take a heck of a lot of ingenuity to figure out that the Americans won this one, because they took it off the table and they have seven years to define a subsidy. It will take seven years once the economy of this country gets locked in with the American economy, and how are we going to say no? We will have been in there for seven years, and then we will find out that the Americans will bargain toughly, and that indeed we have unfairly subsidized, for example, fishermen on the East Coast with unemployment insurance.

I am amazed at how naive the Government is on the whole question of the free trade agreement and the possible impacts that it might have on our unemployment insurance program and our other programs such as medicare, family allowance, maternity benefits, and a whole host of others.

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971

It seems to me that, while we have no quarrel with the principles of the Bill, and we are prepared to have the Bill go through in jig time, we have to ask, what was the Government's intention with unemployment insurance?

We remember those intentions very clearly in November, 1984 when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) made his financial statement in the House and announced severe cut-backs to the unemployment insurance program. It was designed to take some \$500 million out of the unemployment insurance program. The Government received a considerable amount of flak. As a result, the Forget Commission was established to study the unemployment insurance program. We all saw behind that a sinister move on the part of a Government that was mesmerized by cut-backs and cutting deficits. We saw a sinister move by the Government to get a report that would recommend Draconian changes to the unemployment insurance program.

Sure enough, Mr. Speaker, you could have laid your money on it and you would have got no odds at all, because Claude Forget produced a report that this Government would surely have loved to have taken to its bosom to implement. The people of Canada put heat on the Government, as surely as they will put heat on the government Members in respect of the free trade agreement. They will put their feet to the fire. They will stick matches under their toe-nails and light them. It seems that that is the only way that we can make an impression on the other region of their anatomy. It seems that we must do something extreme to the bottom end to get something in at the top end. That is the only way.

• (1730)

Ms. McDonald: How about sticking their fingers in the toaster?

Mr. Rodriguez: It is more dramatic to put matches under their toe-nails and light them, because that gets them hopping around. In that way they have to think.

Mr. Weiner: We don't smoke so we have no matches.

Mr. Rodriguez: That is what happened in terms of the response of Canadians to the report of the Forget Commission. They pulled the Government up short. It made government Members stop and think about what they were going to do with the recommendations of the Forget Commission.

I saw a scathing attack on the Government by its friend and bosom partner, Conrad Black. He chastised the Government for not having implemented the Forget Commission report. Do Hon. Members remember the article? Can we imagine Conrad Black castigating the Government? This is the Conrad Black who treated his workers at the Dominion Stores so beautifully! He went into the pension kitty and took out the money. Instead of increasing or creating equity, he created a lot of debt for the company and walked away from it. This is the person who castigated the Government in a recent article by saying that it should have put the Forget Commission report into effect. As