

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

for deficits and public debts that the Government so conveniently and purposefully insinuated into the debate to justify its slashing of programs and its imposition of taxes is in turn imposing heavy repercussions upon the provinces.

Consequently, workers' needs may be rebuffed by shortage of funds statements and by their own sense of self worth and desire to avoid the dole and, as a result, accept whatever work is available. The weakest will be hurt the most. There will be 10,000 fewer participants in job development programs next year, and participants in those programs normally earn an average of less than \$240 per week. Lest we lose the significance of that figure, let me refer you to the report of the National Council on Welfare, the 1989 version, Mr. Speaker. It estimates that the poverty level for a single person in this country rests at \$245 per week and for a family of four at \$573 per week.

The outlook for workers does not brighten with the knowledge that the increased premium rates imposed upon businesses during an anticipated economic slowdown—in fact, one predicted by the Minister of Finance—will spur employers to pass on the cost to employees by using either fewer workers or by opposing more vigorously employee demands for pay and benefits increases to meet the rising cost of living. For all these reasons and others this Bill is a very regressive social statement.

Canadians had become accustomed, and rightly so, to the concept of a society where a Government could be expected to contribute to the gradual betterment of its people if for no other reason than to give its citizens a sense of economic security during hard times. The UI system is an integral part of that concept, and the most widely used by Canadians to balance off disparities is being challenged and threatened by this Bill. Through this legislation the Tories are attacking Canadian's hard won gains to buttress collective advances over the decades. Our own Government is telling us that it will not participate in any plan to help Canadians on a rainy day. Then, it proceeds to limit the amount of help we can give ourselves with our own money. Having thus amended the legislation, the Government or the Minis-

ter would then have us still believe that it will backstop any deficit in times of need.

However, there is nothing in the proposed legislation that would legally bind the Government to cover the UI fund should it go into deficit after January 1, 1990. Moreover, the legislation gives the Department undue discretion to allow UI premiums to be funnelled into non-UI training programs in the CJS system, even though federal law specifically prohibits the use of UI funds for non-UI programs. The fund is for its participants. The Government should develop its own sources to satisfy its obligations to other Canadians rather than resort to deceptive measures to draw upon funds that have been entrusted to the Government for the administration of the unemployment insurance fund.

If I appear sceptical it is because this Government acts only when pressed and then, as my colleagues on this side of the House know, ever so reluctantly and ever so slowly even when constrained by Supreme Court decisions. I cite an example. The extended benefits for seniors, for parental and sick leave have only come about in the Minister's own words:

[*Translation*]

"To respect the equality provisions of the Charter and because recent court challenges to current provisions have brought to light the iniquities of the present system."

[*English*]

This Bill is not only unfair. It is anything but honest. Last year 1.4 million Canadians worked for less than three months. Yet knowing this, the Government has embarked on a path to deprive these people of the meagre individual benefits to which they might otherwise be entitled, as it proceeds to retract previous contributions to regions through the UI system.

Does it make good economic sense to withdraw this injection of cash from local economies where the much missed consumer spending is likely to touch off further rounds of lay-offs and shutdowns?

• (1600)

The first half of the Government's two-pronged labour development plan seems to be saying that the onus, the burden, will be on the employee to find and keep a job. Any job. Worth noting is that 60 per cent of all new