

Supply—Labour

who are publishing this anonymous propaganda, but I am sure the chief whip does not intend to apply that word to any hon. member of the house. At least I hope he does not, if the hon. gentleman wants to suggest that any statement I have made is not true, then let him get up at once and say precisely what is untrue. If he can demonstrate it is untrue I shall withdraw it, as I have done on one or two occasions in this house when I inadvertently said things that were not strictly accurate. I think that has been my record in this house and I hope it always will be, because it seems to me we cannot have any decent management of our public affairs unless the words of members of parliament can be relied upon.

That is why I did not think for one minute, or suggest, that the Prime Minister deliberately did this. I do not think he did. I just say it is careless, but the fact that it is careless is inexcusable. Why are these speeches made? They are made to influence the public in deciding what government they should have in this country, and surely there is enough that is right to be said to influence the public without distortions and plain falsehoods being used for that purpose, as this statement is in this little blue booklet.

I have said these things because it seems to me that behind them is the attitude the government have taken about this whole problem. They have refused to admit that this was a serious problem, and that is why it continues to become more serious. A government that grappled with problems would have done something about it long ago, and that they have failed to do.

Mr. Carter: Before the minister replies to the questions that have been asked I should like to put one simple question regarding the administration of the fund. I understand that the act provides penalties when claimants do not meet the proper requirements, that is, if they leave their jobs voluntarily or if they lose their jobs for cause or various reasons. In determining the extent of these penalties does the person adjudicating a claim have discretion?

I ask this question because some very great discrepancies have come to my attention in parallel cases. In some cases where the infringement has been a minor one there has been very heavy disqualification, and in other cases where there was quite a strong infringement, which I think would merit a big disqualification, the disqualification period has been very short. I would like to know whether that sort of thing arises out of the act itself or out of the discretion of the person adjudicating a claim.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

Mr. Thrasher: I see it is now seven minutes to five o'clock and I am hopeful the committee will see fit to pass this item before five o'clock.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Well, we have some questions.

Mr. Thrasher: There were a few questions put to me, but first of all I would like to say that the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate showed a great deal of concern about the truth. He was criticizing those whom he said were publishing false statements, and he said if he inadvertently made any statement that was not correct I should remind him of it. I would point out to the hon. gentleman that in his remarks he said the only change in this legislation had to do with increased contributions. In reply to the hon. gentleman I indicate that there were other changes increasing the benefit period to 52 weeks; there were amendments extending the seasonal benefit period, and there were changes in the regulations putting married women on the same basis as the other contributors to the fund.

Mr. Pickersgill: I readily acknowledge that the hon. gentleman is right about those things that he specified.

Mr. Churchill: And that you were wrong?

Mr. Pickersgill: No, some of those things were done by regulation.

Mr. Churchill: Oh, go the whole way.

Mr. Pickersgill: No. Look here, I certainly was not strictly right, that is quite true; but what I was referring to was the inclusion of any new groups, and I think I am right in that. However, I think the hon. gentleman is certainly right about the other points he raised.

Mr. Thrasher: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Essex East asked whether it was a fact that the unemployment insurance commission sought a larger amount than the amount now before us. May I say to the hon. gentleman that I am not aware of any request on the part of the unemployment insurance commission for any larger amount than the amount now before us. I understand that there was discussion between the commission and officials of the Department of Finance and that this figure of \$25 million was arrived at as one being proper for these purposes at this time.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): My information is that they asked for \$75 million.

Mr. Thrasher: Unfortunately I do not have the same sources of information as the hon. gentleman; I get my advice from the