

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

cannot be weighted against the insurance principles that are used in the commercial insurance industry, which is profit motivated. In addition, commercial insurance is voluntary whereas unemployment insurance is compulsory, and even to expect them to operate in the same fashion displays a real lack of appreciation for the worth of social programs and commitment to make them work for those in need.

Continually running away from the problems of unemployment or shifting the costs of unemployment onto Canadian wage earners will not do anything to solve the fundamental problems which are creating the crisis we find ourselves in today. The government knows or should know, as it has been told often enough, that we are suffering from some very basic structural weaknesses in the Canadian economy which, if not corrected, and if not taken hold of quickly will put us in an even worse mess than we are in today.

I look forward to the time when we will not have to be concerned with legislation that provides for programs like unemployment insurance, to times when government will have recognized, and will have been sensitive enough to recognize, that people's needs cannot and will not be met through the mish-mash of costly social security programs that exist in our country today. I look forward to the day when it is finally recognized that the Liberals and Tories with their piecemeal programs are costing the working people of Canada the right to a decent life for themselves and future generations to come.

I look forward to the day when the great potential of our country is used and developed in the interests of Canada, rather than the continual abuse of that potential by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. I have no doubt at all that day is coming and that Canada and Canadians will be the better for it, when they realize the mess those two parties have created in our country. We in this party oppose the measures proposed in this bill and we strongly urge the government to begin attacking unemployment rather than attacking Canada's unemployed.

In the throne speech the minister made some grand pronouncements about bringing forward long-term employment strategies. To date, the programs which the minister has brought forward are pure tokenism and will do nothing in the long range to cure the unemployment crisis which we face in this country. What we in this party are waiting anxiously to see is the day when that minister finally carries through with the promise that he made to the unemployed people in Canada, and come forward with policies which go toward creating useful job-creation programs to get the unemployed in this country back to work.

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia):** Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to spend a great deal of time talking about this bill on second reading. I want to compliment the minister for not waiting for a total review of the program before taking this particular initiative. I think that the minister has taken the appropriate action. I also want to compliment him for the changes which were made to a regulation which I, in fact, brought in when I had the honour to serve as the minister of that particular portfolio.

I was somewhat surprised by the stand taken by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) who indicated that on eight occasions legislation had been brought forward with regard to unemployment insurance. The fact is that we are in a changing economy and therefore changes must be made. The government's initiative to make the changes at the time they were made should be welcomed because they were, in fact, necessary.

The hon. member also bemoans the fact that the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration has not met. I would suggest that there is a certain amount of *mea culpa* on the part of the hon. member because since he is a member of that committee, I wonder how many times he has approached the chairman and asked for a meeting. After all, the members on the committee control when that committee meets and how often. Had we not spent so much time in the House dealing with Bill C-19, due in a large measure to the interventions of the hon. member for Calgary West, there would have been more time available for the minister to appear before the standing committee to answer the kinds of questions that he and other hon. members may wish to put.

The area in which I would like to compliment the minister for having made changes is the 20-hour week measure which worked to the disadvantage of temporary workers. At the time that measure was introduced, as the minister has indicated, the government was attempting to bring a sense of equity into the position whereby people who were earning small amounts of money per hour or were having to work longer hours in order to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits—yet those at the higher end of the wage scale could qualify for UI benefits by working for a few hours—would be protected. We thought that this measure would introduce some equity into the system as it affected the people who would qualify for unemployment insurance. One of the things that occurred was that it was abused by employers.

During the time that I did not serve as a member of Parliament, from the spring of 1979 to February, 1980, I had occasion to meet with part-time workers and union leaders and to spend a good deal of time looking at government legislation and its resultant impact on various areas. As a result of those meetings, particularly with the union leaders, one of the first things that I did when I came back to the House was to write to the minister and indicate that the 20-hour per week was being abused by employers, that the legislation should be changed, and that I hoped we would come up with some equitable arrangement which would not be detrimental to the people at the low end of the wage scale. The suggestion of one-fifth of the maximum earnings or the 15 hours is a step in the right direction, and I compliment the minister for taking that particular action.

● (1700)

This bill deals primarily with two areas, the first of which is the extension of the variable entrance requirement. Although the hon. member for Calgary West attacked the idea of the variable entrance requirement, he had to concede that perhaps